ERRATA

p3 line 17 Insert the following after the word 'up': 'from 831 in 1867'

p230 line 24 For the word 'Rationing' substitute 'The provision of rations'

p530 Insert the following after line 12: Stanmore, Arthur Hamilton Gordon, First Baron, see entry under Gordon, Sir Arthur Hamilton.
VATUKOULA - ROCK OF GOLD:
LABOUR IN THE GOLDMINING INDUSTRY OF FIJI,
1930 - 1970

'Atu Bain

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The Australian National University

October 1985
This thesis is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was made possible by the generosity of the Australian National University which gave me a four year scholarship. The Fiji Government granted me unrestricted access to the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office accommodated at the National Archives, including open files inside the thirty year period and confidential files. To Mr Setariki Tuinaceva, Margaret Patel, and their staff who facilitated my research and gave me their friendship - Masood, Paula, Eparama, Matai, Jo, Mere and Helen - I extend my sincere thanks.

I am grateful to Mr Jeffrey Reid, Managing Director of EGM Co Ltd, for granting me access to the enormous volume of correspondence files and other private records of the Emperor, Loloma and Dolphin mining companies of Vatukoula; for permitting me to spend several months in the mining town, to have office space, and, for field trips undertaken between 1982 and 1983 when I had a young baby in tow, to be able to rent company accommodation. No systematic oral survey was carried out but a wide range of informal exchanges and interviews were conducted, and I am indebted to the many people who were willing to talk to me despite the possible repercussions. For this reason, they must remain nameless. I would especially like to thank the Vatukoula relations I discovered I had and came to know, the Corries. They not only gave me boundless hospitality and willingly answered all my questions, but helped diminish the sense of estrangement and solitude that marked my early field trips to Vatukoula.
Space does not permit me to name the many incumbent and ex-
management, union and government officers who kindly agreed
to be interviewed but I derived much benefit from discussions
with Ruskin Ward (ex company timekeeper and accountant);
Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi and Navitalai Raqona (ex secretaries
of Fiji Mineworkers' Union); the late Sir Robert Taylor
(Economic Adviser and Financial Secretary, Government of
Fiji, 1947-1952); R.D. Patel (ex member of Legislative
Council); Karl Fleischman (ex Inspector of Mines); Father
Keelan (Xavier College, Ba); and Herbert Murray (ex member of
Mining Board).

In Australia, research was undertaken in Sydney, Melbourne
and Canberra. At the Melbourne University Archives of
Business and Labour where work was done on the mining
collection of the Melbourne Stock Exchange, Frank Strahn and
David Brand were most helpful. So too were the staff of the
ANU Archives of Business and Labour; the National Library of
Australia, Canberra; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the
Research Library of the Sydney Stock Exchange. In the
Blatchfords, I had an exceptional Sydney family: Nola gave me
a home and limitless generosity, and Alan was willing to
share not just his memories of Vatukoula but also his
considerable geological and technical knowledge of Fiji
goldmining.
Many people were generous with their time, guidance and stimulation. Special mention is due to my two supervisors, Dr Dorothy Shineberg and Prof. O.H.K. Spate, who gave me the benefit of their extensive skills and knowledge. Others - Dr Donald Denoon, Dr Gyan Pandey and Dr John Merritt - read one or more draft chapters (in Dr Denoon's case, two complete drafts), and offered constructive criticism and encouragement. I am immensely grateful to Rita Savage who laboured under considerable pressure to produce the final typed draft of the thesis. My family in the United Kingdom supported me throughout. Rosa Mavoli Lewalewa accompanied me on field work in Fiji and endured long cold months in Australia away from her family to be a surrogate mother to Siale. Steven similarly tolerated the long separations and sustained me with the support and love that was so necessary to keep me going. Now aged four, Siale has known no life other than the dislocating one of the Ph.D thesis writer. For taking it all in his stride, I thank him too.
ABSTRACT

This is a study of the making of a working class: a reconstruction of the history of wage labour in the Fiji goldmining industry. It examines the operations of a group of associated Australian mining companies and explores the singular features of Fiji's principal—and today only—mining town of Vatukoula. Through this, it seeks to illuminate the mechanics of labour supply and control in one sector of the colonial labour market.

Mining capitalism gave birth to a new-found colonial prosperity, especially prized in the grim circumstances of the 1930's world depression. The discovery of payable deposits of gold-bearing ore heralded the injection of foreign capital, mostly of Australian origin, and an enthusiastic 'rush' to the colony. Competitive mining gave way to monopolistic production within a few years. It was a transition that owed much to state policy and the political influence quickly acquired by large scale mining capital. (chapter two)

With the establishment of the new industry, Fijians were for the first time engaged as the largest component of an urban industrial workforce. Drawn in varying proportions from all 14 provinces of the colony, they were for at least a decade migrant and indentured. The forces of labour mobilisation were diverse and the balance between economic, social and political variants shifted significantly during the years under review. Contrary to conventional opinion, it is proposed that migration was often
a response to the structural imbalances in the rural economy, particularly the increasing inaccessibility of agricultural land. Non-economic pressures produced a rationalised system of recruitment and, in the long term, were responsible for the proletarianisation of Fijian mine labour. (chapter three)

The primary source of the group's prosperity were the men who, through their toil, converted an amorphous mass of subterranean rock into bars of refined gold. As elsewhere in the colonial labour market, the wage-labour relationship in the industry was an inherently exploitative one. Exploitation assumed racial form, and the character and rationale of a discriminatory job and wage structure is thus examined in some detail. (chapter four)

Segregation and discrimination were also institutionalised outside the workplace. They were ancillary devices by which the basic needs of mine labour were subordinated to the quest for profit; and they helped to maintain an efficient system of control. Low investment in labour welfare took its toll on the health and safety of mineworkers. (chapters five and seven)

The challenge of mine labour took a variety of forms; but like social interaction in general, industrial bargaining and organised protest were moulded (and contained) by production relations based on racial differentiation. The colonial state and the Fijian chieftaincy assisted in the control as in the recruitment of labour, thereby helping to safeguard the industry's system of accumulation. (chapter six)
As the prospects for sustained prosperity began to look bleak from the early 1950's, a battle was waged to check the spiralling production costs that were so threatening to an industry locked into a fixed pricing system. Fijian mine labour was the main casualty. Changes in the pattern of organised resistance and its growing strength demonstrated, however, that capital's dominance was by no means assured. (chapter seven)
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<td>C/L</td>
<td>Commissioner of Labour</td>
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<td>CO</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>Council Paper</td>
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<td>CS</td>
<td>Colonial Secretary</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
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<td>DO</td>
<td>District Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>EGM</td>
<td>Emperor Gold Mining Co. Ltd</td>
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<td>FMD</td>
<td>Fiji Mines Development Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM &amp; ME</td>
<td>Inspector of Mines &amp; Mining Engineer</td>
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<td>JCC</td>
<td>Joint Consultative Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bosevakaturaga</td>
<td>Council of Chiefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>buli</td>
<td>government appointed district chief</td>
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<tr>
<td>dalo</td>
<td>taro, a staple root crop</td>
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<tr>
<td>galala</td>
<td>independent or 'free' farmer usually living outside his village and exempt from communal obligations</td>
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<tr>
<td>kerekere</td>
<td>the practice of requesting or soliciting goods</td>
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<td>koro</td>
<td>village</td>
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<tr>
<td>lala</td>
<td>tribute in the form of labour services, food or other goods commanded of right by a chief</td>
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<tr>
<td>loloma</td>
<td>gift, offering, greetings, love</td>
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<tr>
<td>luveniwai</td>
<td>traditional healer or medicine</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>masi</td>
<td>beaten bark cloth made from the paper mulberry tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>matanivanua</td>
<td>spokesman or herald for a chief</td>
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<tr>
<td>mataqali</td>
<td>the primary (social) division of a village</td>
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<tr>
<td>meke</td>
<td>traditional song/dance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>roko tui</td>
<td>head of provincial administration; sometimes also a title given to persons of rank</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>sogosoqo</td>
<td>association or club</td>
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<tr>
<td>tabu</td>
<td>sacred, taboo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabua</td>
<td>sperm whale's tooth generally used in some form of ceremonial exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>talai</td>
<td>Fijian title for the head of the Fijian Administration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>taralala</td>
<td>a European style dance in pairs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>tikina</td>
<td>government district</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turaga</td>
<td>chief, man of rank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turaga-ni-koro</td>
<td>government appointed village headman or chief</td>
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</table>
vakamisioneri  annual financial levy by the Methodist Church
vale ni mate  house of death, hospital
vanua  land, small political grouping of villages
Vatukoula  rock of gold
vulagi  visitor, outsider, alien, foreign
yagona  ceremonial drink made from the root of the piper methysticum, kava
yasana  province
ORTHOGRAHY

For indigenous terms the standard Fijian orthography is used:

b is pronounced as mb in number

c is pronounced as th in that

d is pronounced as nd in end

g is pronounced as ng in singer

q is pronounced as ng in finger
A NOTE ON REFERENCES

Use has been made of documented sources which cannot be cited in the thesis because of their confidential nature. A list of confidential references has therefore been compiled for examiners use only and does not appear as part of the bound volume. References are referred to in the thesis for the first time as 'see confidential appendix' and thereafter as 'see C.A.'
A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In line with early company practice the word half-caste has been used to describe persons of mixed (commonly Fijian and European) descent. Although in the post war years Part-European or Euronesian increasingly became preferred alternatives, the word half-caste has been retained for simplicity unless quoted otherwise.

A NOTE ON CURRENCY

Fiji currency is used in the text unless indicated otherwise. Pounds, shillings and pence were replaced by dollars and cents on 13th January 1969.
INTRODUCTION

The colonial period of Fiji's history has received the attention of historians, anthropologists, economists and administrators amongst others and academic probing has been wide-ranging in focus. Nevertheless, there remains a vast stamping ground for the research student and, for the historian, ample scope to challenge the often undeclared yet implied theoretical perspective that underlies much of the research findings already committed to pen and paper.

Despite the expansive historiography, there is a conspicuous shortage of studies on the Fijian people in their capacity as agricultural or industrial labour.¹ In contrast to an enlarging body of penetrating scholarship on Indian indenture,² the Fijians have been little studied outside the context of the agrarian economy (as producers) or the socio-political parameters of a separate native administration. Our understanding of the misnamed 'Polynesian' indenture experience - at its numerical zenith between the mid-1860's and 1870's - is similarly reliant on a few cursory descriptions in the abounding studies of 19th century colonial policy.³

This thesis spans a period of fifty years from the birth of goldmining around 1930 to the end of colonial rule in 1970 and is primarily concerned with Fijian labour employed by an associated group of Australian mining companies operating at Vatukoula. The dates are indicators rather than definitive marking posts, for chapter one examines the plantation labour experience of the late
19th and early 20th centuries and chapter seven presents an overview of developments occurring between 1950 and 1970. It is the first 20 years of events and activities relating to the production of gold that are portrayed in detail. The Marxist framework used in the thesis is not explicit. Rather, it has informed the study, provided the basis of its thematic structure, and inspired the kinds of questions that are believed both relevant and necessary to presenting an analysis of working class formation. The role of the state as a political structure reflecting the (sometimes competing) interests of capital and the traditional élite is one specific question addressed.

It was initially intended that this be a study of migrant labour that would concentrate on unravelling the causes of migration and the structural characteristics of the mine labour market. A large volume of economic and social data was assembled from official diaries, half yearly and annual reports for all 14 labour supplying provinces; and demographic and other information mostly relating to age, marital status, villages/districts of origin, wage levels and work categories were extracted from the service record cards of some 2,000 Fijian, Rotuman, half-caste, and Indian men employed by the Emperor, Loloma and Dolphin mining companies.

As the search for other sources of information proved fruitful, it became clear that a detailed survey of the provincial economies and computer processing and analysis of the service record data were tenable only at the price of relinquishing the opportunity of writing a thesis that was broader in scope. This seemed more fitting in the context of a colonial historiography so poorly serviced in labour studies. Discussion of the various
The phenomenon of the company mining town holds a particular fascination for both social and labour historians. The Vatukoula example under review encapsulates the oppressive characteristics of a captive labour settlement with the paradoxical blend of solidarity and conflict that pervades a community whose working and social lives are inextricably interwoven. In both respects, Vatukoula has stood the test of time, surviving the profitability
crisis of the 1950's and 1960's as well as transition from a colonial dependency to political independence in 1970. As a study of the past, it is hoped that the thesis has, for this reason, a contemporary relevance.

The neglect of Fijian labour history appears to be less the result of academic oversight than a predictable consequence of the fact that one (pluralist) theoretical frame of reference has tended to dominate the historiography and determine the direction of historical investigation. The dearth of Marxist scholarship is a noticeable coincidence. Misconceptions about the nature of traditional social relations and the impact of colonialism, particularly the effects of 19th century land and labour policies, appear to lie behind these anomalies. Fijians have been erroneously categorised as a homogeneous group of comfortable landowners, a kindly fate attributed to enlightened imperial management. They have been generally ignored as an agricultural or industrial workforce because of the mistaken belief that conditions for class formation did not exist.

To be sure, land appropriation in Fiji, unlike some other parts of the British Empire, was not absolute; and labour for the capitalist economy was not procured by the forced separation of Fijians from the agricultural means of production. The recruitment of labour under short term contract did not necessarily lead to or derive from severed ties with the land and traditional society. In the mining industry, the transformation of a migrant and unstable labour system into a settlement of proletarianised workers was slow; there were, for many years, fluctuations in the regional distribution of labour; and the
dependence on wage employment was neither uniformly established nor consistently maintained.

Against this, however, there is ample evidence to show that the link with the land was by no means universally secure, still less adequate; and that the movement of Fijians on to the mine labour market was not nearly as circumscribed a process as official sources would have us believe. On the theoretical level, we are reminded by Raymond Williams that the Marxist notion of base or substructure was not, in fact, perceived to be an immutable economic structure. Rather, it was a complex and changing process that was intrinsically contradictory, a definition which could hardly be said to conflict with the early structural irregularities in Fiji's mine labour market.

Similarly, the shortcomings of popular notions of the term 'working class' are perhaps usefully noted. As Marxist historians like Rodolfo Stavenhagan, Harold Wolpe and Issa Shivji have all shown, the concept has generally proved irrelevant to the analysis of non-Western agrarian societies. In such cases, the relationship between metropolitan capitalism and traditional (subsistence or redistributive) social formations may not necessarily result in the development of Western-type classes.

But while the category of the migrant worker, for example, might 'not constitute a social class' because of a continuing reliance on subsistence agriculture, labour is, nonetheless, sold in return for wages and in circumstances that are highly favourable to industrial capital.
The conceptualisation of the plural society in its original form by J.S. Furnivall evolved from observation of certain ethnic or cultural contradictions which appeared to explain the lack of consensus within colonial societies. Since 1948, when he first wrote of the way in which colonialism had led to the emergence of plural relations in thitherto homogeneous and thus consensual societies, the construction of a theoretical framework that gave meaning and purpose to conflict has emerged as the chief task of pluralist writers. In the process, the model has been refined, developed and modified. The structural basis of social relationships has, for example, been recognised by some as relevant to explaining communal cleavages or tensions. Others have marked the importance of class as an analytical tool. This ideological compromise has, however, proved to be little more than the incorporation of class as a dimension of cultural or ethnic plurality, playing only an ancillary role in influencing social attitudes and behaviour.

Where plurality has been couched in a relationship of domination – whether this be economic, political or cultural (or indeed all of these as Furnivall held) – the dominant and the dominated partners have been presented as homogeneous, economically undifferentiated groups. The theory of internal colonialism gives an extreme variant of this perception, the imperial power being seen to establish (or to sanction the establishment of) domination over all its colonised subjects and not just over the working class, and being itself a totality of population rather than the ruling class component.
Harold Wolpe has rightly criticised this argument on theoretical grounds. 'No attempt', he argues, has been made 'to identify the specific mode of exploitation and domination characteristic of internal colonialism which purports to differentiate it from class exploitation and domination.'\textsuperscript{11} Exploitation is simply described in a general way as is 'racial or ethnic oppression' and independently of class exploitation. We learn nothing, he charges, of the social relations that prevail in the colonial context; and an isolated analysis of plurally-differentiated groups implies estrangement from the total social structure.\textsuperscript{12}

Like the absence of total land dispossession, the pre-eminence of communalist loyalties amongst different racial groups has seemed to justify a rejection of applied Marxist theory in Fijian history writing. The notion of a class consciousness derived from and determined by established relations of production has appeared inappropriate to a colony that has produced social behaviour, industrial organisation and political alignments defined along racial lines. In the early decades of goldmining, communalism was conspicuous as an ideological force, and racial cleavages were undoubtedly an obstacle to class-based agitation.

But the protracted emergence of a class identity and class-based conflict does not invalidate a Marxist analysis; and as the thesis shows, the strength of communalism diminished significantly from around the mid-1950's. Traditional values were increasingly displaced by a new (class-based) urban culture. In this context, it is worth noting William's observations that by 'determination' Marx meant 'a process of setting limits and exerting pressures' for which men's own activities rather than 'a pre-existing
external force' (as proposed by the 19th century idealists) were responsible; and that the consciousness or organisation of wage labour (superstructure) was not a 'simple reflection or reproduction' of the material base but 'a related range of cultural practices'.

The limitations of pluralist theory are especially evident in its tendency to confuse the outward manifestation of social antagonism with its source or root cause: its failure to recognise that racial violence is symptomatic of economic or social alienation rather than just a mark of communal consciousness. In the final analysis, the descriptive tools of the pluralist provide a static and superficial model that contributes little to our understanding of the continuously changing forces which determine the form and expression of social relations.
INTRODUCTION – REFERENCES


10. The theory of internal colonialism has been advanced explicitly by Casanova, Pablo Gonzalez 'Internal Colonialism and National Development' in *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol 1, No 4, 1965, pp 27-37.

12. Wolpe op. cit. pp 234-235. Charles Bettelheim has similarly concluded: 'Because the concept of exploitation expresses a production relation — production of surplus labour and expropriation of this by a social class — it necessarily relates to class relations (and a relation between 'countries' is not and cannot be a relation between classes).'


Map 1: General Map of Fiji Showing Pre-1945 Provincial Boundaries
CHAPTER ONE

BEFORE GOLD

I Introduction: Aspects of Social Change and the indigenous labour market before Cession

From existing studies, our knowledge of the size and character of Fijian migration within the archipelago in pre-contact times is limited and largely speculative. Migration seems to have been a response to a diverse range of factors including warfare, internecine disputes, sickness, and the exhaustion of available land reserves. An important characteristic was that these movements involved whole social units or groups as opposed to individuals.¹

The penetration of European missionaries, traders and settlers in the first part of the 19th century and finally formal colonisation in 1874 brought a new dimension to the process of migration. While continuing to be a group activity until the early 20th century, changes in the determinants and type of migration followed the introduction of European trade goods and the European demand for wage labour. These proved to be important catalysts of social change.²

The labour mobilisation generated by the sandalwood trade at the turn of the 19th century was not sufficiently extensive to lead to a transformation of social organisation and production. The experience was shortlived and confined to certain areas, mainly in western Vanua Levu. European crews often cut the wood themselves and Fijians engaged in cleaning and stowing the wood were generally supervised by their chiefs. Nonetheless, an economic value was
thenceforth attached to labour; and this, together with the possibilities for accumulation and the uneven access to trade goods including iron tools like axes, adzes and knives, at the very least established the foundation for socio-economic change. 3

Consolidating this trend, the bêche-de-mer trade followed in its wake around 1830. Belonging to the holothurioidae species, the sea-cucumber or slug was to become the colony's main export for nearly thirty years. For many parts of the group, its collection and preparation brought Fijians into contact with Europeans for the first time. The process demanded sustained labour over several months in a variety of work categories. With their families, men travelled long distances (up to 100 miles) to a shore station where they often worked under direct European supervision. It was common practice for payment in trade goods - that now included firearms - to be made not to their chiefs but to the labourers themselves; and the large quantities of food, firewood and timber required in addition to the bêche-de-mer itself, meant that there was a greater redirection of labour time and effort away from subsistence agriculture and other customary tasks. The influx of firearms added a new and explosive dimension to the pattern of unevenly distributed trade goods and the inter-regional balance of power. Indeed, according to R.G. Ward, the access to muskets and munitions was a key factor in the political hegemony which Bau secured in the 1850's. The evidence for this, however, is by no means conclusive. 4

On the whole, the labour requirements of 19th century mercantile capitalism and early settler society appear to have been satisfied by indigenous labour reserves. A keen appreciation amongst Fijians of the value of their labour power and their desire to acquire
tools, weapons and other goods facilitated this. They nurtured an industriousness that, according to at least one contemporary observer, was widely applauded:

All authors describe them as acute and witty; cheerful at work, and polite, even punctilious in intercourse...They are willing to labour when they can count upon reaping the fruits of their labour, which they rarely can under the Chiefs. They are also said to be tractable when kindly managed by those who know their peculiarities. 5

A surge in the settler population following the outbreak of civil war in America was, however, to bring a shortfall in the supply of labour. The disruption to cotton production in the southern states injected into the resident European community of Fiji a planter class (mainly from Australia and New Zealand) anxious to take advantage of high cotton prices. The influx pushed an already booming European population up to 2,500 by 1870.6 Production for export - underway by 1861 - expanded just as swiftly: by 1870, cotton was raising as much as 90% of the colony's export revenue.7 The boom did not, however, endure. Within a few years, the effect of resumed production in America was sorely felt as prices plummeted and many - particularly the smaller planters - were condemned to debt and desolation.8 As the mainstay of the plantation economy, cotton was survived by copra and sugar, both of which were to enjoy more lasting, if fluctuating, fortunes.

The transition to plantation farming was significant, for labour like land, was now needed in much larger volumes. Labour shortages were in fact to prove sufficiently acute to prompt the indenture of foreign supplies.9 A further factor added impetus to the dynamics of social change: for Fijians engaging as plantation labour, the experience of a job and wage structure which did not appear to
discriminate in favour of those with hereditary rank, almost certainly encouraged a questioning of traditional values.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to examine the background of the labour crisis of the 1860's and 1870's. Yet, it is perhaps worth outlining some of the main arguments that surfaced within planter circles, for these formed the backbone of contemporary ideology as well as pressure for state intervention following Cession. In turn, they made a mark on the labour laws of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Prominent amongst the assertions of European settlers were that an affluent economy which enabled Fijians to satisfy with ease their subsistence needs, stripped them of any interest in sustained and arduous work on the plantations; 'native' lassitude was to some extent congenital; and the chiefly social system obstructed the 'free' flow of labour on account of the communal appropriation of earnings and the prerogative of chiefs to recall labour.

Consistently scorned for its inhibiting effects on individual enterprise, communal society was viewed as inherently unprogressive. This stereotype was bolstered by charges of cultural inferiority, and combined, became entrenched in settler consciousness. Racist preoccupations, however, masked the intense frustrations at being unable to control an alien power structure. And a sense of missionary purpose legitimised the vehemence with which planters denounced the perceived obstructions to an abundant labour supply. Fijian interests were being served – not violated – they argued, by their exposure to superior technology, while employment on the estates offered them freedom from a lifetime sentence of communal servitude.
The importation of an outside source of labour became a logical solution to the problem of obtaining a cheap and reliable workforce. And in 1864, following the example set by Queensland, the first batch of indentured Melanesians were introduced to the colony. By 1877, over 8,000—some of whom had already served time in Queensland and New Caledonia—had been imported under three year contracts. They came mainly from the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands. But although alleviated, the labour problems of the settlers were by no means resolved. Unable to compete with their more affluent counterparts particularly in Queensland, local planters offered wages and conditions of service too poor to maintain an adequate flow of labour beyond the following decade.

Changing metropolitan attitudes also contributed to the steady dwindling of Melanesian labour as the London-based philanthropic societies articulated the growing concern of middle class liberals about the inhumanity of the labour trade in the southwest Pacific. The first (Gordon) administration following Cession was accordingly pressed to correct the tarnished image that Fiji, like Queensland and New Caledonia, had acquired. A first step in this direction was to be the repatriation of time-expired Melanesians who had been detained in the colony by impecunious planters.

It has been suggested that the employment of Fijians became more selective around the time that the Melanesian experiment was launched; that those hired on the estates were chosen from more distant villages, less able to provide the material and psychological support, and thus the independence, that interfered with labour stabilisation. This being so, a detailed account of the early pre-Cession history of Fijian wage labour is yet to be
reconstructed. And from the extensive primary documentation of the Fijian labour market, the picture that emerges of recruitment, conditions of employment and labour control, is that the local traffic supplementing outside reserves was not insignificant either for its size or abuses.

Indeed, if deceit, fraudulence and coercion were instruments of labour recruitment prior to the 1860's, the acute shortages periodically faced from that time only intensified the resort to such practices by planters. And, although they remained one of their main targets, the chiefs generally proved to be willing collaborators. With the aid of trade goods, cash and arms, planters succeeded in manipulating relations within and between social groups. The bribery of chiefs became a typical means of procuring labour, and as the pioneering work of Peter France shows, chiefs were not, as their part of the bargain, loath to use direct force to raise labour quotas. The coastal areas of Ra and Ba on the island of Viti Levu and the Yasawa Islands to the northwest, served as fertile reservoirs of 'forced' labour from the early 1860's. Ammunition and firearms offered local chiefs an attractive return for their young men; and it was only Ra's own (mainly wartime) labour needs that curtailed the trafficking in that area.

The events of 1871, in turn, suggest that the labour question needs to be examined in the context of political rivalries amongst local chieftaincies prior to Cession. In that year, the paramount chief, victor of these struggles and nominal head of the pre-Cession government of 1871-1874, Ratu Cakobau, sold the survivors of a campaign against the rebellious Lovoni people of Ovalau 'into virtual slavery on the plantations.' With their lands expropriated
and sold by auction, men, women and children were deported to European plantations where they raised the princely sum of £3 a head for the Cakobau administration. Two years later, the survivors of Cakobau's military campaign to subjugate the Ba district of northwest Viti Levu—people from the vanua of Magodro, Qaliyalatina and Naloto—met a similar fate. Their confiscated lands were amongst those that comprised the package deal offer of Cession in 1874.¹⁷

Early in 1875 a labour ordinance was enacted to eliminate labour sales. It indicated the extent to which Fijian labourers had become the victims of planters and chiefs alike who I regret to say in the one case often impose on the natural timidity of the native race, and in the other case by the exertion of their authority compell the common people (kai-si) to work for them, or to hire themselves out to Europeans, and to leave their homes and families for longer or shorter periods. ¹⁸
II A blueprint for colonial administration: land, taxes and indirect rule

The administrative formula introduced into Fiji by its first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (1875-1880), and continued under the direction of his successors William Des Voeux (1880-1885), Sir Charles Mitchell (1887) and Sir John Thurston (1888-1897) made a decisive impact on the social relations of early settler society. As the 'native' policy of the 1940's later showed, its legacy was to be an enduring one.

The preservation of Fijian ownership of land, the communal administration of Fijians through their traditional elite, a system of taxation-in-kind, and a restrictive labour policy comprised the four mutually supportive components of Gordon's platform. The economic, political and social costs of dismantling the existing chiefly hierarchy and creating the other conditions that could give rise to a landless proletariat were too formidable to ignore. The 'wisest course' according to Gordon was to maintain the structure of village organisation and the customs associated with this.

Addressing the Royal Colonial Institute in London in 1879, he argued further that:

The employment of natives in the administration of the Government was, indeed, a financial necessity; for the means did not exist, and do not exist, for the payment of such staff of white officials as would have been required had the services of natives been dispensed with, but had no such imperative cause existed to render their employment inevitable, I should equally have deemed it to be required by considerations of policy. Unless removed from their habitual places of residence, and treated with a harshness wholly incompatible with the understanding on which the islands had been ceded to England, chiefs of
intelligence, high rank and great social influence would have become, if stripped of all authority and deprived of all employment except that of brooding over their own changed condition, very dangerous elements in the Colony... 2

Gordon's initiatives were also influenced by the devastating effect that a measles epidemic in 1875 had had on the morale and the physical capacity of Fijians to provide plantation labour. A total indigenous population of around 140,000 had been reduced by at least 20% and, in some labour supplying districts, by nearly 50%. This being said, his 'Little War' against the hinterland inhabitants of the Colo districts in 1876 paradoxically showed that force could be used to great effect and that the notion of 'native' protection was elastic enough to accommodate less than diplomatic means of appeasement. On the whole, however, the numerical superiority and military might of the Fijians, the dispersed settlement encouraged by the island formation of the colony, and the inaccessibility of military supplies for the state, advised against a policy of suppression. There were, in addition, considerable advantages in retaining the existing pre-capitalist economy: agricultural surplus could be extracted and the administration guaranteed a regular tax income through Fijian production of selected cash crops.

Gordon's land, taxation and labour policies were by no means unique to Fiji. The existence of indigenous hierarchies in other parts of the British Empire was also raising the awkward question of whether to accommodate or to dismantle them. To take one example, indirect rule in Africa around the late 19th century was rationalised on similar grounds to the Fijian experiment. And, as Margery Perham argued in defence of Lord Lugard as a 'benovolent despot', his
policy of ruling 'indirectly' through the Nigerian emirs cannot, ...as a general principle, be claimed as either inventive or original. Clearly the choice demanded little invention from a governor confronted on the one side with large, semi-civilised but not uncooperative principalities, and on the other by his own absurdly inadequate staff and revenue. 5

Long before Lugard's time, the political advantages of integrating the chieftaincy of Natal into the structure of colonial management had been recognised by a contemporary of Gordon, Sir Theophilus Shepstone - Agent to the Native Tribes and Secretary for Native Affairs between 1845 and 1875. 'Tribal distinctions that obtain among them', Shepstone observed,

are highly useful in managing them in detail, and those are sufficiently preserved by their tribal heads...They form a republic of petty clans, without a federal head; and must therefore exist in a state of political weakness. 6

Much later, Gordon's policies bore striking resemblance to Shepstone's prescription for the turbulent society of Natal, in particular the reservation of land exclusively for African occupation, administration through traditional authorities, and the restrictions placed on African urbanisation.7 In both cases, labour was indentured from India; the mobilisation of local labour was tailored to comply with policies seeking to promote indigenous agriculture and preserve traditional social formations; and the Colonial Office joined the settlers in opposition. 'The Native Policy' Gordon was chided in 1876,

...was...rather a large pill to swallow but we have swallowed it bravely in order to give you the chance you desire of proving that you can govern the natives instead of killing them off. 8

Fiji's model of indirect rule was essentially founded on a division of the colony into provincial, district and village units, the allocation of administrative powers to chiefs designated in order of
seniority roko (provincial chief), buli (district chief), and turaga ni koro (village headmen), and a supporting apparatus of native regulations, district and provincial courts, and councils at each level up to the Bosevakaturaga or Council of Chiefs. It was intended that there be more than lip service paid to customary lineages and boundaries — indeed, that the Native Administration would be distinguished both as an inspired, semi-autonomous unit of colonial management, and because it institutionalised customary forms of social organisation and control. Yet, the gulf between tradition and the new found orthodoxy was to prove as wide as it was conspicuous. As Peter France has concluded:

The Fijian Administration very soon established itself as the new mode of social control which supplemented and, in some respects, incorporated that of the chiefs. To the European official it had the semblance with its unfamiliar language, titles and observances, of an indigenous institution. But to Fijians it was an imported system of authority whose demands, and whose sanctions, reflected the way of life of the white man rather than their own. 9

Gordon's codification of what he claimed to be traditional land tenure was similarly steeped in conflicting views about customary practice. But, despite the absence of uniformity in proprietal units and tenure practices, the communal ownership of land was firmly vested in the kinship group known as mataqali and became one of the main tenets of his land policy. 10 Shortcomings of this nature were equally apparent in respect of the inalienability of land — another cardinal principle of his land formula. This was not an unconditional surrender to Fijian landowners in accordance with customary perceptions of absolute inalienability, for it was not intended that European settlers be deprived of land they had acquired before Cession or that potential investors be discouraged. 11 The mandate of the Lands Claims Commission set up in
1875 was to approve what it determined to be bona fide claims. Indeed, '...if the absolute inalienability of mataqali land be admitted', Gordon confessed in 1881,

nearly all the sales effected before Cession would have to be stigmatised as illegal and invalid and the settlers required to give up the lands they had acquired. 12

European titles approved in whole or in part by the Commission amounted to over 50% of the 1,683 claims and included 390 ex gratia grants i.e. claims not in fact established indisputably as bona fide. In all, about 415,000 out of 850,000 acres — representing a significant proportion of the colony's arable, mainly coastal land, and including only 16,500 acres actually under European cultivation in 1874 — were alienated in this way. 13

There were other anomalies in the applied principle of inalienability. Although between 1874, when all native land not in use or occupation by Fijians was vested in the Crown, and 1880, when the Native Lands Ordinance was passed, settlers were prohibited from acquiring Fijian land, there was no legal hindrance to the alienation by the Crown of what are technically Crown lands although in fact the property of a mataqali not then making use thereof. 14

It was on this spurious basis that Thurston's sale of 1,000 acres of mataqali land to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in 1879 was legally sanctioned. 15

The Native Lands Ordinance of 1880 itself demonstrated the limitations of a policy of 'protection'. The ordinance enshrined the principle of inalienability of land to non-Fijians; but under certain conditions, the Crown was entitled to appropriate land and
then, of course, to dispose of it as it wished. As ultimus haeres, it could retain gratis land which it claimed from an extinct mataqali. It was also entitled to purchase land where mataqali were deemed 'unable to cultivate' their land because of diminished numbers, and 'for purposes of imperative public utility'. Direct alienation under leasehold tenure was approved up to 21 years.16

The existence of a stratified communal society provided the inspiration not only for Gordon's 'native' administration but also for his taxation policy. A poll tax system administered by the Cakobau government between 1871 and 1874 had levied £1 p.a. on men and 4/- p.a. on women. It had proved financially disastrous and had had the (intended) effect of furnishing through its instrumentality a large supply of labour to the plantations of the white settlers. And in this respect it no doubt worked successfully.17

Out of fear and ignorance, Fijians had contracted 'for a year or more of gratuitous service' to planters willing to advance their taxes. Those who did not pay their taxes — the majority in fact — suffered a fate that was equally harsh: they were sentenced to six months (and in practice up to 18 months) labour on the plantation of any settler prepared to pay on their behalf. The donor provinces endured considerable hardship as a consequence:

Whole districts had been well nigh depopulated, and the reckless deportation of the male inhabitants had left the formerly fine provinces of Ba and Ra almost deprived of cultivators.18

The effects of a labour tax which replaced the poll tax in 1874 had not been dissimilar.19

Aside from other considerations, the need to establish a self-financing colony dictated an alternative tax system in addition to
indirect rule. A cash tax of up to £1 was inappropriate in a colony where plantation labourers commanded a mere 1/- per week or £2/12/- p.a. and their consumption of dutiable commodities, with the exception of cloth and cutlery, was minimal. Gordon, moreover, perceived a productive spirit in the Fijians that defied their stereotyped image as indolent and unproductive. And the exploitation of this resource was central to his chosen system of taxation-in-kind.

The compulsory production of selected cash crops like sugar, copra, masi, and tobacco by whole communities was a more reliable means of raising tax revenue. It gave the state control over both production and marketing and enabled the energy and agricultural skills of the Fijians to be tapped with the object of improving the export earnings of an agrarian economy. A communal levy and the use of chiefs as tax collectors took advantage of a familiar mode of social organisation and was, therefore, both more efficient and more financially sound. The poll tax system had ignored such considerations in its individual assessment, its failure to differentiate between chiefs and commoners in the rates levied, and its use of Fijians of 'inferior rank' in its collection. The latter, Gordon argued, had led to 'favouritism' and 'oppression'.

The Colonial Office viewed Gordon's tax formula with some scepticism. The Native Taxes Ordinance, however, came into effect in June 1876 and, despite 'the failure which was by some so confidently predicted', the financial rewards anticipated by Gordon were apparent within a year. The legislation remained on the statute books for 37 years, surviving his tenure as Governor of Fiji and New Zealand. The system was a decisive factor in the early
development of the colony for the contributions it elicited from Fijians both to tax revenue and agricultural output. But it was also not divested of the iniquitous or oppressive characteristics attributed to its predecessors. Districts assigned to sugar production, for example, were subjected to a particularly laborious and much resented route to tax earnings. Aside from having to grow a labour-intensive crop, large distances had to be travelled (sometimes in excess of 20 miles) between home and the selected farming area. This meant that long periods were spent away from families, and food had to be grown and shelters erected at the work site.
III A Protective Labour Policy?

The early colonial experience of Fiji did not, then, conform to the pattern of large scale dispossession and proletarianisation characteristic of imperialism in other parts of the world. Instead, the 'native' policy of the late 19th century deliberately precluded the total expropriation of Fijian land and buttressed the foundations of chiefly society. It has generally been agreed that one of the critical effects of this was to impose serious labour restrictions on agricultural capital; and that legislative controls reflected a philanthropic desire to rescue Fijians from the clutches of labour-hungry settlers. At Gordon's instigation, India became the principal labour reserve from 1879 until after the first world war. The choice was a rational one. Objective conditions of population surplus and economic hardship were reinforced by the country's long history of migration and experience of indenture - to Trinidad and Mauritius, for example, where Gordon had served terms as Governor. Further, the Pacific Islands held out little hope of providing a continued and reliable service necessary for the development of a sound plantation economy.

Local labour shortages were a focal point of settler protest; and although the advantages of an industrious and captive workforce held under five year contracts were soon recognised, there was initial resistance from the settlers to the introduction of Indian labour. It was expensive and generally believed to be 'troublesome, litigious and deficient in stamina'. The administration subsidised the high recruitment and transport costs of Indian (like Melanesian) labour but earnings had to take account of a total dependence on wages as well as competition from other recruiting colonies.
It is in the light of these peculiarities that interpretations of Fijian labour policy have come to be fashioned on dubious notions of 'enlightenment' and 'protection'. A mark of the studies on 19th and early 20th century Fiji has been the tendency of scholars to identify the 1912 Employment Ordinance as a watershed in the scheme of colonial protection. Timothy Macnaught and Deryck Scarr share the view that the ordinance perverted policies which had consistently sought to marginalise Fijian involvement in the labour market and so minimise the dislocation associated with this. Macnaught argues that the 1912 ordinance 'abolished the main safeguards of Thurston's legislation (The Fijian Labour Ordinance and the Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1890).'

Conventional arguments of this kind give a misleading picture of 19th century labour policy. The intention of the colonial state was not to impose labour embargoes on the able-bodied population; and the content of ordinances drawn up between 1875 and 1912 – over twenty years of which were under the direct influence of Gordon or his disciples – does not substantiate claims to official 'protection'. Neither in theory nor in practice was the Gordon orthodoxy as inimical to European planters or as protective of Fijian interests as we are led to believe. The Employment Ordinance was not especially innovative nor the root cause of the social and economic upheaval which occurred during the 1920's. It exacerbated these problems but did not create them. The ordinance was a landmark rather in the sense that it represented the fruition of successive attempts to liberalise the laws governing the engagement of Fijian labour.
The detail that follows in this section is not, however, simply designed to give weight to an alternative interpretation of early colonial labour policy. The Fijian Labour Ordinance, the Masters & Servants Ordinance and the Employment Ordinance were all still on the statute books as Fiji's export economy experienced its first major structural change in the birth of mining capitalism during the 1930's. The controversial Masters & Servants Ordinance was to have a direct bearing on the early recruitment of Fijian mine labour. The contradictions inherent both in official policy and in the attitudes of chiefs towards the diversion of Fijian manpower to European plantations were to become equally apparent once the large scale mobilisation of mine labour was underway. And although goldmining for the first time involved the proletarianisation of Fijians, the mine, like the plantation, labour market relied for some years on a migrant system of contract labour contained within the traditional political structure. For all these reasons, it would seem appropriate to discuss the early Fijian labour experience in some detail.

A conspicuous anomaly of 19th century labour law was that it did not quantify the restrictions on labour outflow from villages. The controls that did exist were enforced at the discretion of local chiefs and the success of government policy thus depended to a large extent on the opportunity cost of their cooperation. Against the immediate advantages – in cash and kind – of supplying labour, there were the long term handicaps of reduced manpower, diminished tribute and the erosion of their traditional authority. As agricultural labour demands expanded during the 1870's, the deleterious effects of over-recruitment became more evident. The chiefs emerged as the official voice of protest, the Bosevakaturaga ironically raising
loud objections in 1878 (as in later years) to a domestic labour trade which the chiefs had themselves helped to establish and administer:

Our people are many ways enticed and enduced to go to work far away from their homes leaving their wives, their children, their relations and everything in their homes in a most bitter and pitiable condition — and it is the cause of the people being in a state of poverty and desolation. This will continue until at last we their chiefs or the Government take measures to alter this. 3

In common with Gordon, the chiefs' opposition was directed not at the use of Fijian labour per se, but rather at the effects of unregulated recruitment on subsistence agriculture, housing and other activities relating to the social and economic welfare of those left behind. But vested interests did not necessarily dictate adherence to the directives of central government; and for this reason, the chiefs showed a persistent ambivalence to the related questions of labour regulation, abuses of rank and acceptance of bribes. 4

The Colonial Office observed the widespread bribery of chiefs by planters with distaste. And it was somewhat uneasily that it noted Gordon's failure to put a stop to 'customary' payments of yagona money. Even for Lord Kimberley, a Secretary of State described as 'generally partial to white supremacy', the 'system of presents' (in respect of Queensland) is a very serious matter... It is difficult to suppose that the natives can understand them as anything but purchase money for the 'emigrant': and it appears moreover that captives taken in war are procured in this manner, we have I fear a traffic which differs in little but name from Slave Trade — as to the Chiefs, letting their prisoners of war come away 'at their own desire' — how can a captive, caught probably for the express purpose, exercise any choice? It is the old African story over again. 6
In real terms, the Fijian practice of yaqona money differed little. Cash offerings accompanied requests for labour and were distributed amongst local chiefs on a per capita (laborer) basis. Instructions were passed down from roko to buli and turaga ni koro, and labour quotas distributed amongst the villages comprising a district.  

Concerned more with suppressing the unpalatable methods of labour recruiters rather than the practice of recruitment itself, Gordon's Native Labour Ordinance of 1876 prohibited the use of 'fraud, falsehood, intimidation or coercion' to induce labour to enter a contract of service, the penalty for which was a maximum fine of £50 or a six month gaol sentence with the possibility of hard labour. No reference was made to 'purchase money' and new legislation the following year went so far as to offer protection to planters who made advances and were then let down.  

The survival of yaqona money was no mystery. Despite the importation of labour, the estates continued to suffer shortages. And behind the official attempts to give the practice a traditional respectability, there was frank recognition that it was a necessary evil if the chiefs were to be kept contented and the planters' labour needs met. As Governor Des Voeux put it in 1879, a chief was, as a result of recruitment, '...deprived of the quasi-feudal services due to him from the absentee', and it was therefore '...not unnatural that [he] should be unwilling to grant leave without a consideration'. In turn, a chief's cooperation was imperative because the low wages paid by the planters did not yield adequate 'voluntary' labour. Each province, Des Voeux admitted, usually had no more than a handful of discontented youths 'willing to seize the opportunity of engaging on any terms'. It was
unquestionably true that the great majority of able-bodied men would not leave their homes, even for much stronger inducement than the wage (of 2/3d per working day) now offered by the planters, and that in some provinces...men cannot be obtained on any terms... 9

It was not until 1883 - long after Gordon's departure from the colony - that 'misrepresentation' was also blacklisted and that the sale, loan or supply of anything to a chief 'with the intent to induce such Chief to procure or assist ... or with intent to recompense...' were prohibited. 10 The labour law that year also forbade gifts of goods or money to a 'native' for the purpose of inducing him or his inducing others to enter contracts. Followed an uproar from the planters, however, the ban remained on the statute books for only three months. The amended legislation prescribed that

Yaqona or the customary payment preliminary to a labour contract and made by or on behalf of the intending employer to the intending labourer shall be permitted in the form of a cash payment only to the extent of one pound or less to such intending labourer... 11

The distinction between chief and commoner was unlikely to be effective. First, in accordance with custom, 'purchase money' paid directly to a labourer would, like other goods or services, probably continue to be transferred of right to his chief. 12 Second, the penalties prescribed by the different labour ordinances varied considerably. The Native Labour Ordinances of 1883 and 1890, for example, carried a maximum fine of £100 or three months imprisonment. On the other hand, if labour was contracted under the Masters & Servants Ordinance, the offence brought only a maximum £20 fine. It was hardly surprising that twenty years after Cession Thurston should observe that, although the bribery of chiefs had for the most part been suppressed, '...occasionally the recruiting agent
is still found visiting a local Chief, with a bag of silver in one hand, and a bottle of spirits in the other'.

Between 1876 and 1883, cheap Fijian labour could be acquired without too much difficulty. Labour engaging for less than one month was subject to no official regulations and permitted to engage at unlimited distance from a home village. For periods of employment over one month, written contracts were in theory obligatory although it was not unknown for men to leave home 'nominally under monthly contracts...but really for much longer periods'. Contracts were given a maximum tenure of one year and signed before the local Stipendiary Magistrate; but it was possible for employers to elude the conditions that applied to contracted labour by engaging a chief to procure the labour. Equally anomalous was the waiving of the minimum age stipulation (14 years) where a boy's parent or guardian contracted for the same plantation and for the same period. Further, although the 1877 Labour Ordinance introduced compulsory licensing of recruiters in cases where labourers were engaged for periods beyond one month from areas (provinces or islands) outside their own, it was not until 1880 - following complaints from the Council of Chiefs - that employers were obliged to return time-expired labour (within 14 days).

Before 1886, the colony's labour legislation offered no statutory guideline to Fijian earnings. When in that year, a labour ordinance introduced a minimum wage, it stipulated 8d per day. By contrast, indentured Indian males were entitled under the Indian Immigration Ordinance of 1891 to 1/- a day. On the basis of a five and half day week, they thus received around £12 p.a. Melanesian immigrants were not so fortunate, adult males being indentured at the rate of £3 to
£4 p.a. around the late 1860's; but from the mid-1880's, a significant proportion earned between £3/4/5 and £6 p.a., and from the turn of the decade, most were being paid between £6 and £8 p.a. Behind the low return of about £2-£3 offered to Fijian labour in the late 1870's, there were expectations of the contribution which the village economy would make both by supplementing the earnings of the labourer himself and by taking care of his dependants. Over sixty years later, the low cost structure of Fijian mine labour was to reflect similar thinking.

Wage discrimination was compounded by the government's decision in 1877 to permit employers to deduct tax monies from wages. Cash earnings were cut by up to one-third, leaving those with gross incomes of £3 p.a. to receive as little as £2 in the hand. There were occasional grumbles within the colonial secretariat about the low wages paid by planters, and it was recognised that the 'fault' of labour shortages indeed lay with 'themselves alone'. As P.S. Friend, the Stipendiary Magistrate of Lower Rewa protested in 1877, "The idea of a strong able-bodied Fijian working (and they are made to WORK) Three hundred and sixty-five days for the paltry sum of sixty shillings is something extremely ridiculous and to deduct Twenty shillings from that amount for taxes seems to me very unjust."

But although earnings rose because of market shortages, the comparative cheapness of Fijian labour remained well into the next century. Before the first world war, the average wage of unskilled Fijians was less than half the average wage of indentured Indians; in the aftermath of the war, it amounted to less than one-third of that paid to 'free' Indians.
In 1883, the legal restrictions on the recruitment of labour were tightened. The stringency of the ordinance bringing these into effect was necessary in the light of complaints at three consecutive Councils of Chiefs of 'the misery caused by the withdrawal of so large a proportion of able-bodied men from their native districts'. The colony was accordingly divided into what were termed 'Home Districts', the size of these being confined to a maximum aggregate of two adjacent provinces. Engagement for any length of time outside these districts required written contracts. In addition, labourers had to have the consent of their turaga ni koro and buli before being registered by a European Stipendiary Magistrate. Married men (except where permitted under the Native Regulations), men whose employment would interfere with their communal obligations, all women, and children under 15 years, were forbidden to enter contracts. The Governor was also empowered to prohibit recruitment in a particular district where he saw fit to do so.

Given the increasing scarcity and higher cost of Melanesian labour, the introduction of these restrictions unleashed a furious response from the planter community. Tensions were aggravated by its failure to get agreement to a repeal of the ordinance to permit payment of labour outside a home district. Dislocation resulting from labour not being returned home was particularly marked in cases where large distances had to be travelled between the workplace and home. It was for this reason that the government remained steadfast. The traditional system of communal rights and responsibilities, Thurston argued, meant that Fijians were 'foreigners' in provinces outside their own and that if regulations did not ensure that they were returned and paid in their own districts, they found themselves
quickly 'relieved' of their earnings (or goods purchased with these). Too ashamed to return penniless to their homes, these men often became 'vagabonds and a drain on the resources of other districts, while their families might not see them for years'. Writing to the Earl of Derby, Thurston protested that Gordon's labour policy had thus merely been misunderstood. The Fijian was in fact perfectly free to engage as long as he does not emigrate from his native island, or does not contract for periods over a month - without any legislative or other interference. In all cases he is also free to engage subject to the provisions of Law ... No restriction is put upon Fijian labourers working within their own Provinces or districts adjacent to such provinces. But when engagements involve that which correctly named is Emigration, then such engagements are regulated by law. 24

Amendments to the 1883 Ordinance offered the planters two palliatives: the payment of yaqona money was sanctioned and contracts with remuneration of less than £12 were exempted from compulsory registration.25 Criticised by Thurston as a 'Planter's Bill',26 the 1895 Fijian Labour Ordinance - repealing the Native Labour Ordinances of 1883, 1886 and 1890 - further improved the terms under which Fijians could engage. A significant change lay in the elimination of home districts and adjacencies so that Fijians were again 'free' to work for less than one month in any part of the colony. In addition, married men were permitted to engage for up to three months.27

Task work had become an employer's option in 1886 when the Native Labour Amendment Ordinance defined it as 'piece-work that can be performed by any ordinary able-bodied Fijian in six hours working diligently...'; set the number of weekly tasks at five and a half; and fixed a minimum wage of 8d per task.28 In circumstances where
the nature of jobs was regulated to correspond to working hours and thus to the earnings of time labour, it is probable that task labour would not have been subjected to the degree of coercion known to have been experienced by Indians who were paid only for the completed part of their tasks. This provision made Indian labour more vulnerable to illicit manipulation of task sizes by employers; and overtasking indeed proved to be rampant particularly during periods like the 1880's when employers demanded higher productivity in order to mitigate the effects of depressed sugar and copra prices.

Under the 1895 ordinance, a similar avenue to intensive exploitation was created for employers of Fijian labour. The definition of task work was revised to mean 'any work the pay for which is estimated by the amount performed irrespective of the time occupied in its performance', and it accordingly became lawful to deny workers the full (minimum) daily rate if they did not complete their tasks. The outbreak of disturbances on labour lines in Lautoka in 1900 revealed that the CSR Company, for one, was taking full advantage of this new concession:

The task daily per man is to dig out 26 balawa (pandanus) trees, for 8d. a little over 1d. per tree... There is of course tremendous difference in the size of balawa trees: young trees can be pulled out by the hand, while others will take a half a day to dig out, working hard at... The task is a manifestly heavy one, and the best proof is the average earnings of the men. One Naloto man gets down one tree per diem regularly, and Mr. Fenner credits him with 1d. (one penny) per diem. It is always one large tree.

...It will be found I think that the majority are earning wretched wages a few being allowed to finish their tasks as 'instances of the fairness of the task.'
Amongst the restrictions prescribed by the Fijian Labour Ordinance, there were those limited practical value because of other conflicting legislation. For example, although the consent of both a turaga-ni-koro (oral) and buli (written) was obligatory, a Fijian could, under Ordinance 15 of 1889, be absent from his district for 60 days before facing a prosecution charge. If he had his buli's consent, he could be away indefinitely. This contradiction was frequently taken advantage of by large numbers of men to visit the neighbourhood of the large sugar mills where they accepted service under job contract or weekly engagement. 31

A more serious anomaly existed in the use planters were allowed to make of the 1890 Masters & Servants Ordinance although Fijian plantation labour was explicitly excluded from its jurisdiction. The terms of the ordinance made it much more of a 'Planter's Bill' than the Fijian Labour Ordinance and it was therefore hardly surprising that such a strong preference was shown for it. An intending labourer was obliged to fulfill only certain (unspecified) conditions pertaining to his free consent and his family and provincial obligations, these being determined by any District Commissioner. The consent of his village and district chiefs was not necessary. There were no time limits (i.e. within the year) for contracts entered by married men. Employers were not obliged to return their time-expired labourers to their homes or to pay the cost of return transport. And under an ambiguous clause which made monthly contracts terminable on one month's notice, the ordinance sanctioned non-contractual engagement beyond a month: in order to be 'within the law', it was necessary for notice to be given on the date of engagement — an unlikely event! 32
It was difficult if not impossible for government officers to be familiar with the backgrounds of those (intending) labourers who came before them from distant districts. It was also not unheard of for them to ignore the more obvious indicators of a labourer's unsuitability for indenture, such as age or physical frailty. In 1900, for example, the Inspector of Native Labourers, T.S. Potts, described how insufficient care had been taken by the Stipendiary Magistrate of Levuka in 'recruiting and passing' labour indentured from Vanua Levu for the CSR at Lautoka:

> Amongst a gang of 27 Nalota men 10 were youths not fit to do a man's work there was also a very old man and a cripple his left arm being completely wasted away. [sic] Amongst a gang of Wailevu men there was an old man about 60 years of age and a little boy certainly not 13 years of age besides a number of youths from various parts certainly not fit to do a man's work.

In contrast to the Fijian Labour Ordinance, the Masters & Servants Ordinance dictated no restrictions on working hours, demanded no overtime, and, save a passing reference to 'necessary food and lodging', embodied none of its stipulations about living standards, medical facilities and rations for labour. Fijians indentured under it were not, moreover, afforded the protection of the 1891 Labourers' Medical Care Ordinance which covered related issues like the recording of diseases, accidents and deaths, and the inspection powers of medical officers. In other respects, the Masters & Servants Ordinance fell short of its successor. There were no prohibitions on the use of fraud, falsehood or misrepresentation, or the payment of gratuities greater than £1. The maximum penalties for the use of 'any threat' or payments to persons other than the intending labourer were conspicuously lenient as were those imposed on 'masters' for misuse or ill-treatment of labour: in the case of the latter, a £5 fine or two months imprisonment contrasted with a
£20 fine or six month sentence under the Fijian Labour Ordinance. The range of offences that could be committed by 'servants', on the other hand, was more extensive and carried stiffer penalties. Only under the Masters & Servants Ordinance were 'drunkenness' and 'insolence to his master' classified as punishable 'misdemeanours'. They brought £5 fines or two months in prison. 36

The employment of Fijian plantation labour under the 1890 ordinance had a number of serious consequences. Fijians could be held liable for offences which were not legally applicable to them; and with the cost of an appeal prohibitive, they would, the Attorney-General conceded, '...have little chance of redress if...convicted.' 37 In addition, a high rate of absenteeism resulted from men being able to enter contracts without permission from their chiefs and from the failure of the ordinance to require employers to repatriate their time-expired labour. In 1899, a complaint from the Roko Tui Ra that labour recruited from a number of hinterland districts had not returned home from Vanua Levu prompted an official investigation. It was considered necessary 'not...to put obstacles in the way of men freely going to work' but that the government remain steadfastly committed to a policy of return on expiry in order to prevent '...interfere(nce) with the Native Taxes and the Native system of life generally.' Stipendiary Magistrates were accordingly advised that the hiring of Fijian plantation labour under the Masters & Servants Ordinance was illegal. 38

Active support for a 'protective' labour policy was now all the more imperative for demographic reasons. The 1880's had seen successive outbreaks of influenza, whooping cough, dysentery and dengue fever, some of epidemic proportions. Whooping cough alone had caused 3,000
deaths in 1884. Following a more sporadic pattern thereafter, introduced diseases continued to exhibit high mortality rates - two examples being the measles epidemic of 1903 and the horrifying influenza epidemic of 1918 which claimed as many as 8,000 lives, over 5,000 of which were Fijian (5.66% of the Fijian population). At least until the mid-1910's, population estimates consistently showed a declining Fijian population. 

The illicit use of the Masters & Servants Ordinance may have been initially curbed after 1899; it was by no means suppressed. Overall, state intervention to curb violation of the labour laws was half-hearted and continued engagements lent the practice a respectable air of legitimacy. By 1911, the administration again had to reckon with complaints from the chiefs, this time in the form of submissions from the Roko Tui Kadavu, Ra, Ba and Rewa and the Buli Nasau (of Colo North) at the Council of Chiefs. The matter was deferred until the following year when the government took a step that was guaranteed to aggravate rather than to diminish the social and economic dislocation caused by unauthorised absenteeism.

Signalling an important landmark in colonial labour policy, the 1912 Employment Ordinance was an attempt to meet the objections of employers to the restrictions of the Fijian Labour Ordinance and (to a lesser extent) the Masters & Servants Ordinance. It was also a pragmatic response to changing conditions in the labour market. The mounting criticism of the indenture system by political and humanitarian groups in Britain (the Liberal Party taking office in 1905), visiting missionaries, the Government of India and Indian nationalists, cast a dark shadow over the future of Indian labour supplies. Formal abolition of indenture in 1916 and the
cancellation of remaining contracts in 1920 confirmed the worst fears of the CSR and other employers who were heavily dependent on continued immigration for the prosperity of their plantations. One immediate effect of abolition was to force a rise of more than 60% in the cost of 'free' Indian labour. The disruption to labour supplies caused by the 1914-1918 world war and the close of Melanesian shipments in 1912 added to these pressures and no doubt gave weight to what was now a strong case in favour of improving the accessibility of indigenous labour reserves.

Residual reservations within the administration about the wisdom of larger scale Fijian employment were now too feeble to obstruct the formulation of an 'employer's' labour policy. 'There can be no question', Governor May (1911-1912) wrote to the Secretary of State in 1912,

...that it is desirable to encourage Fijians to enter into contracts of service under the Masters & Servants Ordinance and under the Fijian Labour Ordinance. There is a large demand for domestic, skilled and unskilled labour and provided the communal work incidental to Fijian village life is not unduly interfered with it is for the good of the Fijian population that its members should help meet the demand. 44 (my emphasis)

Other factors reflecting a shift in policy around the turn of the decade, paved the way for a steady influx of Fijians on to the labour market during the 1920's. The governorships of Sir George O'Brien (1897-1901), Sir Henry Jackson (1902-1904) and Sir Everard im Thurn (1904-1910) shared few of the traditionalist sentiments of their predecessors. In favour of large scale settler development, they espoused, instead, the belief that individual enterprise was far more congenial to economic expansion and the salvation of a dying Fijian race. 45
In line with this thinking, the communal basis of cultivation for taxes and distribution of tax refunds was steadily dismantled from the late 1890's. The switch to refunds based on individual contributions to revenue in 1900 penalised those with limited or no access to land. Previously able to contribute to the communal levy by working someone else's land, the landless taxpayer was now obliged to compensate his erstwhile benefactor (by gifts of food, cash etc) for having his share of the total refund reduced. For a growing number of districts, land shortages, crop failures and other factors also dictated a preference for wage labour as a means of raising taxes. On the whole, the administration was receptive to such requests and the reinstatement of a compulsory cash tax in 1913 was all but a formality. 46

Sensitive to the increasing demands for land by both European planters and Indian tenant farmers, the administration of Sir Everard im Thurn sealed its opposition to the Gordon orthodoxy in an unprecedented approval of land sales between 1905 and 1909 and in the extension of leases from 21 to 99 years. 47 It also sought to curtail and, in some cases, to stamp out customary practices of exchange and redistribution that were held to impede the economic efforts of individual Fijians.

Pre-dating Cession, such transactions had diverse and even paradoxical roles. Ceremonial exchange cemented a society founded on stratified clan relationships; inter-island trading rationalised commercial specialisation; and institutions like kerekere (soliciting or begging) provided a check to 'accumulation and centralization of wealth by any individual or group and promoted continual redistribution.' 48 The practical difficulties of
enforcing the new regulations and the agility with which Fijians skirted them, combined to minimise their impact. But for one area at least - Southern Lau - where there was a dependence on food from outside, the effects were critical. Prohibition of inter-island exchanges meant that cash had to be found to buy imported foodstuffs.\(^49\)

Changes in land and taxation policies, and the assault on selected customary practices, were compounded by other developments. The suspension of indirect rule around 1915 all but removed the authority of chiefs within local government; and with a reduction in the scope, sanctions, and range of recipients entitled to compulsory lala or tribute, contributed to a general weakening of traditional values evident even before the turn of the century. In 1894, Thurston had observed with alarm a change in attitude amongst ordinary Fijians: 'the commoner is asserting himself too rapidly, and is shaking off his obedience to his chief'.\(^50\) The settlers, on the other hand, strengthened their position when, following a petition for representation in the Legislative and Executive Councils in 1904, they were granted six elected seats in the Legislative Council.\(^51\)

Through enactment of the Fijian Employment Ordinance in 1912, the administration sought to give legal stature to a practice it had tacitly endorsed for some fifteen years. Only in its draft form, however, did the ordinance in fact legalise the engagement of Fijian agricultural labour under the Masters & Servants Ordinance. In its final version, its wording was ambiguous; it extended the class of
men eligible to indenture but not the classes of contract into which Fijians could enter. Strictly speaking, Fijian plantation and husbandry labour remained outside its scope.\(^5\)2

With the declared objective of the ordinance being 'to remedy certain restrictions which have hampered the free exercise by Fijians of their liberty to enter into the employment of Europeans when they desire to do so',\(^5\)3 all married and unmarried men were eligible for indenture subject to arrangements being made for the care of their dependants. Contrary to accounts by Scarr and Macnaught, however, its terms were little different from those specified under the Masters & Servants Ordinance. The obligation on an employer to repatriate his labour and the compulsory authorisation of a buli before men engaged, for example, had been withdrawn by the 1890 ordinance, and not as they suggest for the first time by the 1912 ordinance.\(^5\)4

Only two provisions really distinguished the Employment from the Masters & Servants Ordinance: the lifting of the 12 month limit on contracts and the right of employers to sign on men who had been 'voluntarily' absent from their districts for two years. From 1912, indentured Fijians were no longer liable under the Native Trespass and Vagrancy Ordinance of 1899 which gave chiefs the right to recall and prosecute unauthorised absentee. The novelty of this concession, however, was more apparent than real: with labourers permitted under the Masters & Servants Ordinance to engage without the permission of their buli, the chief's longstanding efforts to prosecute absentees under the Native Trespass and Vagrancy Ordinance had generally proved futile. In this respect, then, the ordinance merely legitimised an existing situation.
As an engine of social change, the Employment Ordinance was undoubtedly an important piece of legislation. Yet, because it has been inaccurately compared with preceding legislation, its culpability for the problems of the 1920's has tended to be exaggerated. It facilitated the larger scale indenture of Fijians and it lifted many of the restrictions of the Fijian Labour Ordinance. But the safeguards of the Masters & Servants Ordinance had, as observed above, long proved trifling and it was under this that most Fijians indentured. Notwithstanding the problem of making calculations based on unreliable census data, it is evident, furthermore, that the 1920's merely saw an acceleration of what were already rising rates of Fijian absenteeism and wage employment.

Taking the Fijian adult male population of about 19,000 in 1901, a significant proportion (about 15%) was employed outside the home villages. By 1911, the number of adult males living away from home and engaged in wage employment amounted to 2,631. As a proportion of the able-bodied male adult population of 15,132 (i.e. excluding those discovered to be suffering from blindness, deafness, lunacy or imbecility) this came to about 17%. Ten years later, the number had risen by 43.5% to 3,778; and general labour statistics (both male and female) had increased by 72.5%. The pattern of Fijian population growth during both (1901-1911 and 1911-1921) intercensal periods, on the other hand, continued to show a general decline.

The suggestion here is rather that the uniqueness of the Employment Ordinance lay in conditions likely to promote the long term stabilisation of indigenous labour. At a time when the economical five and three year indentures of immigrant labour were coming to an
end, it was especially significant that the settlement of Fijian labourers' families at plantation sites was being encouraged; that contracts were renewable on expiry; and that employers paid the cost of repatriating labourers but not their families. Another incentive to immediate re-indenture was that single labourers were not returned and paid in their home districts. May's claim that under the 1912 ordinance '...the ultimate return of employees to their native villages will be safeguarded' was indeed to prove utterly misleading.

By the mid-1920's, it was all too evident that the Fijian Labour Ordinance 'has become for all practical purposes a dead letter'. 'Practically all' Fijian plantation workers (including all hired by the CSR) contracted under the Masters & Servants Ordinance; were 'rarely if ever returned to their homes'; and were denied other 'safeguards' of the 1895 ordinance. The disruption to subsistence farming, housebuilding and other village activities was enormous, some districts being completely stripped of their able-bodied men. 'The effect of this [i.e. the Employment] law', the Secretary for Native Affairs, Islay McOwan, lamented was

...well known. Communal work has been very seriously affected, so seriously indeed as to threaten the continuance of the scheme of native Government. Much of the unrest amongst the native race during the past few years is traceable to this law and to the belief that the Government considered that a supply of labour for agricultural purposes was of greater importance than the welfare of the natives themselves.

At the Council of Chiefs, the traditional custodians of the communal system pushed for revitalised regulation of recruitment. The 1923 Council echoed past pressure for compulsory authorisation of contracts by chiefs and its successor in 1926 proposed a
comprehensive list of initiatives (many of which were new) including a ceiling of 25% on indentures from villages in any one year.62

Despite expressed opposition to an ordinance which still rendered engagement of agricultural labour under the Masters & Servants Ordinance technically illegal, it was imprudent as well as impolitic for the administration to interfere with an established practice – particularly at a time of critical labour shortages. As McOwan himself admitted, '...a very awkward situation would arise if these contracts are declared null & void'.63 Had it not been for repeated calls from the Colonial Office for consolidation and revision of the labour laws, the matter might well have been left alone. It was clearly preferable to turn a blind eye rather than to have the matter brought out in the open, as the government's rejection of a request for clarification of the Masters & Servants Ordinance by the Convention of Planters demonstrated in 1918.64 If it redrafted legislation, the government could anticipate a backlash of embarrassing questions about the penal sanctions that applied to Fijian labour in the colony. Labour legislation, particularly when supported by such sanctions, the Attorney General warned, was

a very thorny subject which interests Aboriginals Protection Societies and other well-meaning cranks and which occasions considerable anxiety to the Secretary of State.

It was unlikely, he continued, that 'if this question is thrown into the melting-pot again we may not get legislation as good as we now have.'65

The subject was indeed a 'thorny' one, principally because of the political pressure on Britain to eradicate the last vestiges of the reviled indenture system. The findings of the Sanderson Committee on Indian Emigration had led to amendment of the colony's
legislation governing Indian labour — first restricting and finally, in 1915, abolishing imprisonment for labour offences. Yet, despite prodding from the Colonial Office, the government showed little enthusiasm for the idea of decriminalising offences against the Fijian labour laws. Resistance on behalf of the planters from the elected European members of the Legislative Council was fierce. It was, Maynard Hedstrom wrote, 'a very inopportune time' to amend the legislation. Planters in the coconut and banana districts were 'largely dependent upon Fijian labor' and '...to talk of civil remedy against a Fijian servant [was] to talk absolute nonsense'.

Not before 1924 was a bill drafted to consolidate the three labour ordinances and circulated amongst the CSR, the various planters' associations, and the European members of the legislature. This time it was for the CSR to insist that it was an 'inopportune' time to interfere with the long-established relationship between 'master' and 'servant'. A few of the proposed reforms, like the responsibility of employers to pay the repatriation costs of a labourer's family, were queried or dismissed. But it was the proposal to eliminate imprisonment for unauthorised absence from work and other labour offences, that was once again opposed outright by the employers' organisations. Fines alone were held to be an unrealistic penalty — impossible to recover from impecunious labourers. More important, H.M. Scott protested on behalf of the European members, the replacement of criminal by civil sanctions would weaken the control an employer exercised over his workforce. Bluntly put,

...imprisonment (in default of the fine being paid) acts as a very salutary deterrent and it is believed to be the unanimous opinion of those who engage labour that if the imprisonment provisions...are repealed there will be no way of 'holding' the labour.
Imprisonment clauses are considered as vitally necessary for the proper and efficient control of native labour.'

The 1924 bill was shelved, leaving one of the most archaic devices of a coercive labour system to be safeguarded for another 23 years. It was also only in 1947 with the enactment of a new labour ordinance, that the Employment and Masters & Servants Ordinances were repealed.

The claim to a 'protective' labour policy, then, masks an array of legislative and administrative measures which defended the interests of agricultural capital. The progressive liberalisation of Fijian labour laws through the late 19th and early 20th centuries was necessary to meet the expanding labour needs of European planters. This process culminated in the enactment of the Masters & Servants Ordinance of 1890 and the 1912 Employment Ordinance. The failure of the colonial state to enforce the Fijian Labour Ordinance and its decision to retain penal sanctions were amongst the other hallmarks of a fairly permissive policy. The latter, it is argued, emerged out of steady modification rather than substantive changes to the initiatives of Gordon and his disciples in the aftermath of Cession.
CHAPTER ONE - REFERENCES

Section I


11. Lorimer Fison to James Calvert (Natal), undated (between 1876 & 1879), ML/DOC 2361; Gordon to Earl of Carnavon, Secretary of State for Colonies, 9,8,87, Stanmore Papers ML/FM4/2717. The view that the communal system inhibited individual initiative and economic enterprise became orthodox opinion around the turn of the century. The 1921 Census referred disparagingly to the...
Fijians' 'inherited environment of ease and indolence'. (CP No 2, 1922) Although rejected during the 1940's, the theory re-emerged in its most comprehensive form around the late 1950's. See in particular Spate, O.H.K. 'The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects', CP No 13, 1959; Burns, A. et al 'Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Natural Resources and Population Trends of the Colony of Fiji 1959', CP No 1, 1960. For the earlier period, see France op. cit. chapter 9; Belshaw, Cyril Under the Ivi Tree: Society and Economic Growth in Rural Fiji, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, Part III.

12. See Shlomowitz, Ralph Statistical Appendix to Pacific Island Immigrants in Fiji 1864-1914, Flinders University of South Australia, Feb 1983; Derrick op. cit. chapter XV.


16. Derrick op. cit. p166; Chapman op. cit. p212.

17. See France op. cit. pp 94-95 and Derrick op. cit. pp166 (n.30) & 201.

18. L. Layard to Sir Hercules Robinson, 30.3.75, C083/2209. (This despatch was not forwarded until 5.6.76. See Gordon to Secretary of State for Colonies, Despatch 90); Chapman op. cit. p212.
Section II


2. Gordon, Sir Arthur 'Paper on the system of Taxation in force in Fiji' read before the Royal Colonial Institute, London on 18th March 1879, Appendix to Stanmore Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-80, vol III.


6. Welsh, David The Roots of Segregation 1845-1910, Cape Town, 1971, p22. As K.L. Gillion has noted 'The preservation of local customs and the utilisation of local political machinery are colonial practices as old as Ancient Rome or Egypt, for they originate in the need to maintain order and to win the support of the local population with a minimum of expense and dislocation'. Gillion op. cit. p7.

7. The demarcation of reserves was not incorporated into colonial policy in Fiji until 1940 and the Native Lands Trust Ordinance bringing this into effect did not intend racial segregation. This was, nonetheless, the logical extension of Gordon's land policy.


10. France op. cit. pp 110-123.

12. Gordon to Kimberley, 28.3.81, Stanmore Papers vol 3, (Selected Parts), ML/FM4/2718.


15. ibid; Moynagh op. cit. p19; Chapman op. cit. p210.

16. Ordinance No XXI, 1880 clauses III, XIII, XIV, XVI, XVII, XVIII.


19. The poll tax was abandoned in favour of a labour tax by Sir Hercules Robinson, Governor of New South Wales and Officer Administering the Government of Fiji from Cession until Gordon was instated as Governor. The labour tax obliged every male (between 15 and 60) to provide 20 days labour p.a. commutable by cash payments. For further details, see Stanmore Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-80, vol I, pp201-202; Gordon, Sir Arthur 'Paper on the system of Taxation in force in Fiji' read before the Royal Colonial Institute, London on 13th March 1879, Appendix to Stanmore Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-80, vol III; Gillion op. cit. p11; Legge op. cit. p235.


22. Chapman op. cit. pp165, 170; Stanmore Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-80, vol I, pp202-204; Governor to Colonial Office, Despatch No 22, 16.2.76, CO 83/2209; Thurston memo, 3.4.76, in Despatch No 22, CO 83/2209; Gordon to Colonial Office, Despatch No 37, 24.3.78, CO 83/2216. For a general discussion of Gordon's taxation system see Legge op. cit. chapter X.

23. Gordon to Colonial Office, Despatch No 37, 24.3.78, CO 83/2216; Thurston to Gordon, 'Report upon the Collection of Native Taxes for the Years 1876-1877', 3.3.78, CO 83/2219; Chapman op. cit. pp 167-170. The Legislative Council made annual assessments of the aggregate amounts to be paid by each province taking into account the relative size of the taxpaying population, soil productivity and 'the degree of civilisation which the province has attained.' Provincial boards comprising a Provincial Assessor, the Roko Tui, District Stipendiary Magistrate and two
others (elected by the Assessor) were, in turn, required to determine the amount and type of produce to be grown. Prices for the cash crops were fixed by public tender and surplus revenue refunded to the districts.

24. Receipts from native taxes in 1875 (under the old system) were £3,499/2/5; in 1876, they amounted to £9,342/16/3; in 1877, they rose to £15,149/14/8; and the estimate for 1878 approached £19,000. This rise occurred in spite of the measles epidemic. Gordon, Sir Arthur 'Paper on the system of Taxation in force in Fiji'...See also Chapman op. cit. p181 and Knapman, Bruce 'Capitalism or Colonial Development: Studies in the Economic History of Fiji 1874-1939', Ph.D thesis, A.N.U., Nov 1983, pp112-115.

Section III

1. Stanmore Records of Private and of Public Life 1875-80, vol 1 pp 178-179; Gillion op. cit. pp 11-12, 72, 73 & 76; Chapman op. cit. pp 213, 216-217.


3. Vunivalu and Roko Tuis, Fiji to Queen, Rewa Council of Chiefs, in Gordon to Colonial Office, 3.1.78, Despatch No 22, CO 83/2216. A resolution in 1876 requested that a maximum of 50% young unmarried men be absent from their villages at one time. See Notes of the Proceedings of a Native Council held at Waikava, Vanua Levu, November 1876.

4. See CSO MP 622/1911; 'in some cases' Governor May advised the Secretary of State for Colonies in 1912, 'it is alleged that consent is dependent on a suitable douceur from the employer'. F.H. May to Lewis Vernon Harcourt MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 25.5.12, CSO MP 622/1911.


7. For an example of how this worked in practice see Heffernan to CS, 18.6.78, in Gordon to Colonial Office, Despatch No 75, 22.6.78, CO 83/2217.

8. Ordinances No XV, 1876 and No X, 1877.

9. Des Voeux to Secretary of State for Colonies, 20.5.79, in Des Voeux (Governor) to Colonial Office, Despatch No 60, 20.5.79, CO 83/2219.

10. Native Labour Ordinance, No IV, 1883, clause XXVI. Gordon wholeheartedly supported this prohibition, declaring that it 'introduces a very great and necessary reform in the existing system and its adoption is likely to be productive of the utmost advantage' in its attempt to correct the 'abuses and mischief' resulting from former practice. Gordon to Colonial Office, 14.5.83, Individual Despatch CO 83/2234.

11. Native Labour Ordinance 1883 Amendment Ordinance, No XII, 1883.

12. France makes this point in relation to the trade goods acquired by families who fished for bêche-de-mer or supplied firewood to bêche-de-mer traders. France op. cit. p26.

13. Thurston to Marquis of Ripon, Secretary of State for Colonies Confidential Despatch, Thurston (Governor) to Colonial Office, 13.12.94, CO 83/2257.

15. See Ordinances No XV, 1876; No X, 1877; No XXIII, 1880; Morrell op. cit. p388.


17. For account of Melanesian wages see Shlomowitz, Ralph Statistical Appendix to Pacific Island Immigrants in Fiji 1864-1914 (Table 3 - Indentured Pacific Island Immigrants in Fiji: Distribution of Adult Male Annual Wage Rates 1877-1911); Flinders University of South Australia, Feb 1983; Moss, F.J. A Planter's Experience in Fiji: Being a concise account of the Country, its present condition, and its prospects as a field for emigration, Auckland, 1870, p42. For references to Fijian wages see Stanmore op. cit. p203; Moynagh op. cit. pp 19-20.

18. Ordinance No X, 1877.

19. Stipendiary Magistrate P.S. Friend to Governor (Gordon), 14.4.77, CSO MP 491/1877. Gordon also admitted that one of the main reasons for continuing labour shortages was that long term contracts were inadequately recompensed. See Gordon to Earl of Carnavon, Secretary of State for Colonies, 9.8.87, in Stanmore Papers, ML/FM4/2717; and A.P. Maudsley (Acting CS) to Hunter, 21.12.76, CO 881/5 cited in Moynagh op. cit. p20.

20. Friend to CS, 8.5.77, CSO MP 606/1877.

21. This is based on an average wage rate of 13.32d p.dy. for unskilled Indian indentured labour applicable in 1912; and daily rates of 1/6 - 2/- for 'free' Indians and 10/- p.month for Fijian labour in 1918. Commonwealth Govt. of Australia, Inter-State Commission of Australia Report on South Pacific Trade', 1918, p80.


23. Native Labour Ordinance, No IV, 1883.

24. Thurston to Colonial Office, Despatch No 37, 10.3.84, CO 83/2235. Thurston noted that the length of the Fiji archipelago approximated the distance between the West Indian islands of Trinidad and Martinique (or Dominica and Puerto Rico).

25. Native Labour Ordinance 1883 Amendment Ordinance, No XII, 1883.

26. Sir H. Berkley (Acting Governor) to Colonial Office, Despatch No 14, 15.2.97, CO 83/2263; and Governor (Thurston) to Colonial Office, Despatch No 4, 14.1.97, CO 83/2263. W.L. Allardyce, Native Commissioner, argued somewhat paradoxically that '...though the Bill is stigmatised as being a Planter's Bill it is not so in any injurious sense. It is a Planter's Bill in the sense that it affords facilities for his obtaining labour, but it is equally a Labourer's Bill in the sense that it increases the labourer's opportunity for obtaining work.' W.L. Allardyce Native Commissioner to Acting CS minute, 12.10.96, in Governor (Thurston) to Colonial Office, Despatch No 4, 14.1.97, CO 83/2263.
27. According to Allardyce, the abolition of the home districts and adjacencies was not nearly as radical a change as Thurston complained because distances even between adjacent districts were often enormous or over sea. (ibid.) Previous legislation prohibited married men from engaging (or leaving home) except where the prospective period of employment or absence was less than one month and was in the home or adjacent districts.

28. Ordinance No IX, 1886.


30. Excerpt from Ba Provincial Inspector's diary for Sept 1900, CSO MP 4180/1900. Ordinance No 46, 1940 withdrew the distinction between completed and uncompleted tasks.

31. W.L. Allardyce Native Commissioner to Acting CS minute, 12.10.96, in Governor (Thurston) to Colonial Office, Despatch No 4, 14.1.97, C083/2263.

32. Attorney-General to CS minute, 9.6.28, CSO MP 2543/28.

33. T.S. Potts to Native Commissioner Suva, 10.12.1900, CSO 4180/1900.

34. Masters & Servants Ordinance, No XI, 1890.

35. Ordinance No XV, 1891.

36. See in particular Master & Servants Ordinance clauses 6, 7, 12; and Fijian Labour Ordinance clauses 18, 21, 29, 30, 32-37, 41, 113-115.


38. It was recognised that the 'smaller employers' were using the Masters & Servants Ordinance in order to 'avoid the expense of returning the labourers to their homes'. See Assistant CS to HE minute, 18.8.99; Roko Tui Ra, Joni Madraiwiwi, to European Stipendiary Magistrate, 21.7.99; (illegible) minute to Native Commissioner, 11.8.99; Assistant CS to All Stipendiary Magistrates, 25.8.99, CSO 3649/1899.


41. Memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Proposed Consolidation of the Labour Laws, 12.3.27, CSO 1115/27.

42. For accounts of the growing international opposition to the indenture system see Gillion op. cit. chapter 9; and Morrell op. cit. pp 431, 435.

43. Between 1914 and 1920, the daily wage rose from 1/6 to 2/6. Knapman op. cit. p52.
44. F.H. May to Lewis Vernon Harcourt MP, Secretary of State for Colonies, 25.5.12, CSO MP 622/1911.

45. Macnaught op. cit. p15; France op. cit. pp 149-152, 155, 158, 163-164.

46. The details of this paragraph are drawn from Macnaught op. cit. pp 26-27. From 1913, tax contributions were assessed as previously by the Legislative, Provincial and District Councils, differing only in respect of their monetary form.

47. Gillion op. cit. p98; Macnaught op. cit. pp 28-37; France op. cit. chapter 9; Morrell op. cit. pp 429-430.

48. Thompson, Laura Southern Lau, Fiji: An Ethnography, Bulletin 162, Hawaii: Bernice P. Bishop Museum, 1944, pp 207-212; Belshaw, Cyril Under the Ivi Tree: Society and Economic Growth in Rural Fiji, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, chapter XIII; France op. cit. p155. France also describes the prohibition of the custom of tauvu '...by which tribes traditionally related to each other in a certain way had the right to take each other's crops, livestock and goods without limit or protest...'


51. Morrell op. cit. p 428.

52. Attorney-General to CS minute, 9.6.28, CSO MP 2543/28; Ordinance No IV, 1912; CSO MP 622/1911.

53. Memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Proposed Consolidation of the Labour Laws, 12.3.27, CSO MP 1115/27.

54. Scarr op. cit. p68; Macnaught op. cit. p102. Also see Knapman op. cit. p131.


56. Census Report 1901. The number of Fijian adult males here excludes the aged, children and youth. Added to a total of 16,258 (see Table 18) are the late censal returns aggregating 3,378, the majority of whom were believed to be plantation labourers. Note the 15% estimate was not based on the able-bodied population but on the total male adult returns which would have included those who were sick or otherwise physically incapacitated.
57. These calculations are based on data given in Tables 13, 21 and 22 of the 1911 Census Report and Appendices, CP No 44, 1911. From the total number of Fijian males absent from their villages (given in Table 22 as 3,844) have been deducted 1,130 children and students and 83 with 'no occupation'. Similarly, the 753 males afflicted with blindness etc (Table 13) have been subtracted from the total Fijian male adult population of 15,685 given in Table 21. To get a more accurate figure on the able-bodied Fijian male population, the incidence of other diseases would have to be accounted for.

58. Census Report and Appendices 1921, CP No 2, 1922. Table 12 gives 4,884 as the total number of Fijian males absent from their villages. As with the 1911 data, children, students and those with 'no occupation' have been deducted here to give the estimated number of Fijian male wage earners away from home.

59. F.H. May to Lewis Vernon Harcourt MP Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25.5.12, CSO MP 622/1911.

60. McOwan (Secretary for Native Affairs) to CS minute, 27.6.28, CSO MP 2543/28. Memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Proposed Consolidation of the Labour Laws, 12.3.27, CSO MP 1115/27; Further memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Consolidation of the Labour Laws, 21.3.27, CSO MP 1115/27.

61. Further memorandum by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the Consolidation of the Labour Laws, 21.3.27, CSO MP 1115/27.


63. McOwan (Secretary for Native Affairs) to CS minute, 27.6.28, CSO MP 2543/28. In 1922, some 10 years after the enactment of the Employment Ordinance, the government accepted a ruling from the then Acting Attorney-General, H.M. Scott, that it was beyond doubt that the ordinance allowed the employment of Fijian agricultural labour under the 1890 ordinance. With his own commercial land dealings and as legal representative of the CSR, Scott was hardly the most disinterested of arbiters. See McOwan to CS minute, 25.7.28, CSO MP 2543/28.

64. ibid


66. Indian Immigration Amendment Ordinance, No II, 1912; Ordinance No XXIX, 1915; Gillion op. cit. p167.

67. See for example CSO MP 829/1920 and MP 781/1924.

68. J.M. Hedstrom Re Proposed Amendments Masters & Servants Ordinance, 11.2.20, CSO MP 829/1920 (also signed by other European members of the Legislative Council - Scott, Crompton & Marks.

69. Acting Personal Assistant to CS memo, 3.11.24, CSO MP 781/1924.
70. ibid Not until 1947 (Ordinance No XXIII) did an employer become responsible for repatriating a worker's family.

71. Henry M. Scott Memorandum by the elected members in respect to a bill to consolidate and amend existing legislation governing employment of labour, 1.10.24, CSO MP 781/24.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAKING AND MANAGEMENT OF A MONOPOLY
IN THE GOLDMINING INDUSTRY 1930-1950

I Introduction

Until the early 1930's, Fiji's export economy was based on commercial agriculture; and it was from the three primary cash crops of sugar, copra and bananas that the colony won most of its export earnings and generated other, domestic, forms of state revenue. The discoveries of payable gold deposits on Vanua Levu in November 1929 and on Viti Levu in 1931 induced a radical change in the structure of production for export. In 1934, two fields were proclaimed at Tavua and Mt Kasi, and a third followed at Vuda three years later. By 1935, prospects looked good enough for the first Inspector of Mines to declare that even in the absence of further discoveries, 'the new mining industry is likely to become an important addition to the prosperity of this Colony'.

The steady rise of gold to the colony's second most valuable export resulted in the displacement of copra and bananas, though not sugar, as pillars of its international trade. (see table 2.1) This transformation owed its origins to the depression of world commodity prices which occurred during the late 1920's and early 1930's. While this severely dislocated cash crop production, it enhanced the market value of gold. In 1934, the gold price advanced from $US20.67 to $US35 per ounce. The promise of industrial expansion through goldmining was then timely. Low prices and market
TABLE 2.1

RELATIVE VALUES OF PRINCIPAL EXPORTS 1932-1950

(Values expressed as %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Copra</th>
<th>Gold Bullion</th>
<th>Bananas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>80.25</td>
<td>10.60</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>79.64</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>76.17</td>
<td>13.35</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>65.82</td>
<td>20.07</td>
<td>6.50</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>65.44</td>
<td>19.28</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>52.77</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>27.69</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>51.73</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>34.03</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures not available for the war years, 1940-1945. However, it is evident from Table 2.2 that the relative value of gold exports would have continued to climb until 1942.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Copra</th>
<th>Gold Bullion</th>
<th>Bananas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>58.59</td>
<td>10.54</td>
<td>18.24</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>47.24</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>20.98</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>54.76</td>
<td>12.74</td>
<td>13.98</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>46.84</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>16.41</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>48.01</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled from Mining Board Annual Report 1938 (CP No 11, 1939); Mines Dept Annual Report 1939 (CP No 43, 1940); Table B.9, CP No 1, 1960.
uncertainties had not only resulted in rural unemployment and diminished state revenue, but had contributed to the progressive dismantling of communal society. In addition to the attendant expansion of trade, shipping and domestic agricultural production, and the creation of a new source of tax income, the establishment of a goldmining industry promised to resuscitate the colony's ailing job market: to create employment opportunities for the hundreds of Fijians unable to meet either their tax obligations or the other cash demands (both communal and personal) of their increasingly diversified needs. (see chapter three) With its anticipated multiplier effect, it was thus hardly surprising that the prospect of gold production should be welcomed. Simply put, 'a gold mine [was] much more to a country than a source of revenue by direct taxation'.

During the second world war, Britain's policy was to support continuing gold production in her colonies where this was possible. In the sterling area, this became increasingly important as a means of earning dollars once rubber and tin production in Malaysia were disrupted by the spread of hostilities into the Far East. Imperial interests aside, the 'economic welfare' of Fiji became 'increasingly dependent on [the] gold industry'. In 1941, the colony produced gold worth £1,128,884 (see table 2.2) and, in addition to the employment of some 2,000 Fijians, Indians and half castes, it contributed over £125,000 in direct revenue (taxes and royalties). The government derived from this source approximately 10% of its 1943 revenue, most of which was used to finance the war industry. It was probably a conservative amount compared with the preceding years when income from gold production boasted large contributions to total export earnings. Nevertheless, revenue from the industry
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Copra</th>
<th>Gold Bullion</th>
<th>Bananas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>624,310</td>
<td>170,240</td>
<td>2,053</td>
<td>67,237</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1,289,239</td>
<td>195,788</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>69,243</td>
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<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,069,049</td>
<td>127,941</td>
<td>7,590</td>
<td>67,845</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1,314,128</td>
<td>230,263</td>
<td>54,019</td>
<td>66,863</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1,331,701</td>
<td>406,393</td>
<td>131,684</td>
<td>84,548</td>
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<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,388,681</td>
<td>407,354</td>
<td>166,115</td>
<td>80,071</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1,338,183</td>
<td>270,915</td>
<td>701,272</td>
<td>73,578</td>
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<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>1,425,704</td>
<td>204,289</td>
<td>928,128</td>
<td>26,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,285,191</td>
<td>125,063</td>
<td>1,024,923</td>
<td>41,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>942,920</td>
<td>85,168</td>
<td>1,128,884</td>
<td>21,887</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1,761,055</td>
<td>252,544</td>
<td>816,385</td>
<td>42,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1,345,286</td>
<td>318,975</td>
<td>529,761</td>
<td>38,508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>1,035,616</td>
<td>352,492</td>
<td>426,452</td>
<td>18,565</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>536,201</td>
<td>469,177</td>
<td>694,956</td>
<td>42,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>2,111,557</td>
<td>379,760</td>
<td>657,527</td>
<td>49,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2,840,307</td>
<td>966,246</td>
<td>1,288,780</td>
<td>72,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>4,265,406</td>
<td>992,234</td>
<td>1,011,225</td>
<td>94,996</td>
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<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>3,205,524</td>
<td>729,943</td>
<td>1,123,241</td>
<td>119,024</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>3,750,712</td>
<td>544,401</td>
<td>1,420,578</td>
<td>101,869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled from Trade Reports for 1939 (CP No 37, 1940), 1944 (CP No 31, 1945) and 1945 (CP No 5, 1946); Report on the Trade, Commerce, Shipping and Air Services of the Colony of Fiji for the years 1938 (CP No 17, 1939) and 1935 (CP No 19, 1936); Governor's Address to the Legislative Council 22 April 1938; Fiji Colonial Reports 1947-1950.
was clearly of sufficient importance to the colony during the war to warrant direct state intervention to correct shortfalls in the supply of mine labour, equipment and materials. (see chapter three) Excluding the value of income and export tax, the administration won over half a million pounds sterling from gold between 1932 and 1949. (see table 2.3 for this and table 2.4 for direct tax revenue from the major mining companies)

The role of the colonial state in the early years of the industry was as crucial to the structure of mining capitalism as to the relations of production and control which were subsequently created to make it profitable. In explaining the monopolistic tendencies of gold production, historians of mining in other colonies, notably South Africa and Papua New Guinea, give prominence to such factors as the geological formation of disclosed ore bodies and the high development costs incurred in bringing a mine into production.6

Though this argument may well be valid, there are empirical objections to applying it at least in unmodified form to Fiji. For one thing, the creation of a monopoly on the largest mining area at Tavua occurred well before cheap open-cut or outcrop mining was replaced by the large scale underground mining of low grade ore which required the economies of concentrated ownership. The logic of mining capitalism did dictate the early integration of mine management and control by the associated mining companies of Vatukoula. Yet rationalisation of this kind was only one, albeit a critical, factor in the historical process by which they came to acquire unrivalled hegemony in the principal gold field as well as an almost unchallenged monopoly in the colony's production.
TABLE 2.3
ROYALTIES AND TOTAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE FROM GOLD PRODUCTION 1932–1949

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Royalties Received £(F)</th>
<th>Total Revenue* £(F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>4,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>6,530</td>
<td>8,968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>8,250</td>
<td>8,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>35,008</td>
<td>35,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>46,411</td>
<td>46,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>51,372</td>
<td>51,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>56,356</td>
<td>56,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>40,855</td>
<td>41,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>30,129</td>
<td>30,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>22,838</td>
<td>23,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>47,445</td>
<td>47,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>37,289</td>
<td>37,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>48,478</td>
<td>48,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>50,689</td>
<td>50,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>25,494</td>
<td>26,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>507,819</td>
<td>520,211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total Revenue includes fees for prospectors rights, prospectors licences, rents for mining tenements, registration fees, royalties, and miscellaneous; it excludes income/company tax, and export tax.

## TABLE 2.4

**ASSOCIATED COMPANIES, VATUKOULA**

**ROYALTY, DUTY AND OTHER DIRECT TAX PAYMENTS 1938-1950**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Royalty on gold (£F)</th>
<th>Port &amp; Service Tax on gold (£F)</th>
<th>Duty &amp; Tax on Direct Imports (£F)</th>
<th>Income (company) Tax (£F)</th>
<th>Total (£F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>33,155</td>
<td>6,623</td>
<td>11,549</td>
<td>16,398</td>
<td>67,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>42,856</td>
<td>8,546</td>
<td>10,326</td>
<td>18,836</td>
<td>80,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>48,029</td>
<td>9,625</td>
<td>15,738</td>
<td>40,192</td>
<td>113,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>51,606</td>
<td>10,340</td>
<td>14,400</td>
<td>37,149</td>
<td>113,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>38,054</td>
<td>7,623</td>
<td>7,974</td>
<td>66,071</td>
<td>119,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>27,287</td>
<td>5,472</td>
<td>5,688</td>
<td>66,192</td>
<td>104,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>19,538</td>
<td>3,951</td>
<td>6,257</td>
<td>20,835</td>
<td>50,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>45,546</td>
<td>9,109</td>
<td>9,646</td>
<td>63,849</td>
<td>128,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>38,999</td>
<td>7,800</td>
<td>18,448</td>
<td>102,840</td>
<td>168,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>45,263</td>
<td>9,052</td>
<td>18,560</td>
<td>104,689</td>
<td>177,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>44,654</td>
<td>8,930</td>
<td>14,559</td>
<td>78,142</td>
<td>146,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>25,454</td>
<td>11,299</td>
<td>5,779</td>
<td>109,193</td>
<td>151,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>132,192</td>
<td>14,332</td>
<td>6,376</td>
<td>159,055</td>
<td>311,955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Vat/Statistics relating to Activities of the Associated Companies - Vatukoula from January 1935 to December 1964*
The central argument of this chapter is that although several factors may be identified to explain the decline of competitive mining, the intervention of the state, both in response to a powerful mining lobby and by virtue of colonial (and imperial) economic policy, was fundamental. Official mining policy purposefully destroyed the competitive basis of mining capitalism and fostered the very conditions that would permit a monopoly to dominate the industry from about 1937. Available evidence, principally the private records of the associated companies, demonstrates the compatibility of the state's economic and political objectives with the parochial interests of mining capital; it illuminates the mechanics of the relationship between the state and the larger mining companies and the political leverage which the latter commanded over official policy; and it also throws some light on the mutuality of interests of mining and merchant capital and on their political collaboration. State policy helped to create conditions of extraordinary profitability for the associated group although, as section V proposes, the bonanza years of the 1930's and 1940's were more directly attributable to the group's production, financial and labour strategies. These were in part dictated by the group's capital structure.
For some sixty years before the discovery of the Mt Kasi orebody in the Yanawai district of Vanua Levu, the area had been prospected desultorily, revealing gold traces in river shallows and rock outcrops. No discoveries of commercial importance were made before 1929 though local inhabitants told of a fossicker who in the 1880's had earned a living from panning alluvial gold in the Yanawai river. Prospecting ventures that followed justified the introduction of the colony's first mining ordinance in 1908. And in subsequent years, prospecting licences were issued and promising discoveries of alluvial gold were made in the vicinity of the river and not far from the Mt Kasi strike of 1929.

In the competitive scramble for payable deposits from 1930, a number of physical, ecological and geological characteristics of the Yanawai field posed obstacles to large scale exploration and development. The field was situated a few miles inland in remote, mountainous and inaccessible country some 1,300 feet above sea level, and was subject to high rainfall throughout the year. Equipment and machinery had to be transported by boat to the river mouth and hauled upstream through thick forest by tractor to the mine site. Prospecting and mining ventures were thus hazardous and more costly than in other parts of the colony. The low grade composition of the Mt Kasi ore and the shallow nature of its lode formation, moreover, compounded the high cost structure of sustained mining activity.
The first reported discovery in the district of Tavua, situated in the sugar belt of Viti Levu, was made by one Baron A.B. de Este as early as 1872. Subsequent prospecting ventures and geological investigations indicated favourable prospects for both alluvial deposits and lode formations; but it was not until November 1932 that an aged, itinerant Scot and experienced prospector, Bill Borthwick, struck the first payable deposit in the foothills of the Na Kauvadra mountain range some eight miles inland from Tavua. Borthwick was grubstaked by a local European hotelier, Pat Costello, who had extensive business interests in land, property and cattle. His strike yielded little in the way of personal fortune, though it led to the discovery of the Emperor, Loloma and Dolphin mines which were collectively to comprise the backbone of the colony's mining industry for over twenty years. For his part, Costello had neither the capital nor the technical knowledge to carry out the exploration necessary to determine the type, value and size of the Tavua ore-body. Early in 1933, he accordingly communicated the glad tidings of Borthwick's find to a New Zealand mining company, Waihi Gold Mining Company Ltd, and to E.G. Theodore, one time Labour Premier of Queensland and Federal Treasurer of Australia.

Theodore's interest in Australian mining was longstanding; but his most publicised association with it, and one which unlike his political achievements had brought him notoriety rather than fame, had been unravelled as the somewhat sordid Mungana affair of the mid-1920's. The collapse of his political career thereafter had led him into successful business exploits, notably the establishment with Frank Packer of the Consolidated Press of Australia. This, together with his mining venture in Fiji from 1933, represented the culmination of his career. The nickname 'Red Ted', earned for his
active participation in the Queensland labour movement, was scarcely compatible with his later construction of a financial empire, his domination of the Fiji goldmining industry and his powerful and lucrative position as managing director of the associated companies of Vatukoula. By the time he became 'the mystery man of Fiji' he had certainly 'lost touch with the working class'.

As a giant of Australian journalism, Packer's career was hardly less controversial. As one leading paper commented, 'he often appeared, and not without justice, a caricature of the unreconstructed nineteenth century capitalist: robber baron and press baron rolled into one.' With his strong anti-labour sentiments, his 'substantial' influence within 'non-Labor political circles' and his reputation as a 'buccaneer businessman', his close association with Theodore was in itself a measure of how far along to the (political) right Theodore had moved.

Late in May 1933, Theodore arrived in Fiji with a small party of miners and in December entered into option agreements with Costello and the owners of prospecting licenses over adjacent blocks. By April the following year, he had bought the options. The syndicate formed to purchase his interests in the Tavua field represented the collaboration of four Australian capitalists: Apart from Theodore and Packer, two Melbourne magnates - John Wren and P.F. Cody - agreed to capitalise the exploration programme Theodore proposed. The partnership was to prove a formidable one although in the early months of their 'marriage' the reported geological prospects were 'so damning' as to provoke some disagreement over the advisability of committing further capital. Theodore's persistence in the face of pressure from his partners to withdraw
was vindicated by the end of 1934 with the confirmation of a surface deposit of extraordinarily rich telluride on Loloma. The report offered glowing prospects:

To sum up, I would advise you to acquire the necessary capital to develop this mine. It is, without doubt, the richest surface proposition I have ever had the privilege of sampling and must produce large quantities of gold if the values persist to any degree of depth.

In October 1934, the colonial government proclaimed the Tavua and Mt Kasi mining areas, and in January 1935 the Theodore syndicate floated the Loloma and Koroere companies. Assisted by publicity of high values, these two developments attracted investors from Australia and to a lesser extent New Zealand and England. If goldmining promised to replenish the depleted colonial coffers, the steady rise in the world price of gold made the colony an attractive gamble to foreign financiers and speculators. A frenetic trade on international stockmarkets (particularly the Australian) escalated share prices to fantastic heights and over the following year led to the formation of innumerable prospecting companies and syndicates, amongst them a predictable collection of 'wild cat' ventures. All of them joined a veritable rush to many parts of the colony, but mainly to Tavua and Mt Kasi.15 (see table 2.5 and appendices 2.1 & 2.2)

The sharp rise and fall in the number of prospecting rights and licences issued between 1934 and 1937 was a stark indication of the mercurial character of the gold rush: the 'phase of feverish speculation' was shortlived for, after reaching a peak in August 1935, the rush receded almost as abruptly as it had begun.16 Tables 2.5 and 2.6 below illustrate this while table 2.5 also indicates the
extent of Indian participation in prospecting particularly during 1936. As one observer put it, Indians too had 'the gold fever and men are madly pegging all over the place'. Indeed, they dominated prospecting along the Vuda river in the province of Lautoka to the southwest of the Tavua field. With the discovery of auriferous lode formations in May 1935, the proclamation of a mining area at Vuda, and the beginning of mining activities in the neighbouring province of Nadi, Indian involvement became more extensive.

Though prolific, the companies and syndicates operating in the proclaimed fields between 1934 and 1936 were often supported by highly speculative and therefore short term capital. The reckless share trading in some mushroom companies was evident in the sale of £1 shares for £30 in advance of any significant development. The Mt Kasi mine exemplified the way in which stockmarkets were manipulated by the publication of fraudulent reports that inflated a mine's prospects. But the 'salting' of the Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL caused perhaps the greatest public sensation in the colony. In May 1935, the syndicate claimed to have discovered a new gold field at Raki Raki, a sugar centre on the northeast coast of Viti Levu. Its request for protection of its find was granted and no further prospecting licenses were issued in the area. Within a few months, however, the government's suspicions were raised after its own sampling of the area revealed values well below those publicised. The continued rise in the value of syndicate shares prompted further investigation, confirming the falsity of reported values.

From the early months of 1936, prospecting activities swiftly diminished. A confidential despatch to the Secretary of State for
### TABLE 2.5

**APPROVED PROSPECTORS RIGHTS* 1934-1937**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Fijian</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>- figures not available -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Before the enactment of the Mining Ordinance of 1934, Prospectors Rights were called Miners Rights.

Source: Figures taken from Mining Board Annual Reports for 1934, 1935 & 1937 (CPs No 19, 1935, No 6, 1937, and No 27, 1938.)

### TABLE 2.6

**APPROVED PROSPECTING LICENCES 1934-1937**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tavua No.</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Yanawai No.</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Outside No.</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>- figures not available -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10,335</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,615</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5,157</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3,744</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5,438</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>78,382</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>87,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,940</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4,208</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the Colonies from the Governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher, captured the change in atmosphere:

The general position may perhaps be described as one of suspended animation. The feverish excitement of the summer has been replaced by a feeling of uncertainty, if not of depression, and during the past three months share prices, which had been forced to ridiculous figures, have fallen by some £3,000,000. It is being asked on all sides whether the Emperor and Loloma lodes will carry values at depth, what the prospects are of developments elsewhere in the Tavua field, whether Mt Kasi deposits will prove to be as extensive as has been suggested, whether finds in other districts will be productive of payable results. Time alone will give the answer to these questions, but it is all to the good that the brief spell of wild speculation has been followed by a return to sanity. 21

By the end of 1937, there were only five companies with producing mines or actively engaged in prospecting. The major operations in the Tavua area were restricted to the four mines owned and directed by the Theodore group although these were operated by separate companies: all mining leases, apart from a 30 acre block retained by Pat Costello and operated by another Australian company, Aloha Central, were held by the 'magic circle'. 22 Similarly, the Mt Kasi mine remained for its short lifetime under the control of one group of Australian interests; by 1937, other companies - notably East Reefs Consolidated and Mineral Developments Ltd - had either ceased to operate or had withdrawn from the Yanawai area. Mt Kasi Mines Ltd was the only company to hold a mining lease over the second gold field (see table 2.7).

The decline in competitive exploration and the hegemony attained by the Theodore group over the most profitable proven lode formations in the colony cannot be explained simply by the latter's superior capitalisation, the rationalisation of joint production which took effect only during the late 1930's, or the failure of other
### TABLE 2.7

**MINING LEASES ISSUED 1935-1937**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Lease Holder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>E.G. Theodore (subsequently transferred to E.G.M. Co.Ltd.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Mt Kasi Mining Co. Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>E.G. Theodore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Loloma Gold Mines NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>91½</td>
<td>Loloma Gold Mines NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(6 = amalgamation of 4 and 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>E.G.M. Co. Ltd. (approved but not issued)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>(8 = amalgamation of 7 and 1)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Figures taken from Mining Board Annual Reports for 1935, 1936, and 1937, CP No 12, 1936, CP No 6, 1937, and CP No 27, 1938.
companies to find payable ore deposits or to conquer the topographical or climatic difficulties. The close alignment of state objectives with the interests of large scale mining capital and the sustained representation which Theodore achieved for his companies, provided the vital stimulus to the foundation of monopolistic conditions in the industry.
III State Initiatives and Trends in Colonial Mining Policy

Land was a prerequisite of prospecting and mining activities. And the argument in favour of a policy of alienation came to be fashioned, predictably, on the inestimable wealth that would accrue to the colony from mineral development. The first concern for the administration was, however, the dislocation caused by the wanderings of penniless prospectors - men whom Fletcher described as the 'beachcomber type' who took up 'temporary residence' in Fijian villages and rarely reciprocated the hospitality they received. Indeed, their activities threatened to jeopardise the stability of the colony. While Fletcher marvelled at the gracious way in which Fijians tolerated the intrusion, he declared late in 1933 that

We are fortunate in having in the Fijians a people of a particularly peaceful and law-abiding disposition - who hitherto have shown no active resentment against intrusion on their land. In certain other Colonies there would be bitter opposition against the entry of a person of alien race for the purpose of digging over native land. Any wholesale invasion and disturbance of private property is always liable to evoke serious trouble. 2

The 'invasion and disturbance' were not to be 'wholesale', but Fletcher's protestations were belied by the scale of dispossession which he was himself to sanction through the 1934 Mining Ordinance. The twin concepts of land 'inalienability' and 'paramountcy' of Fijian interests were to be all but abandoned.

According to the official record, the land on which active prospecting began at Tavua in the early 1930's was held either by the Australian sugar monopoly, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, or the Crown. The countryside was undulating and the soil of mediocre quality but cane cultivation by the sugar company's tenant
farmers extended along the river valley to within a few miles of the working area. Around 1930, the Fijian settlement at Matanagata at the heart of the proclaimed gold field was, like its neighbouring village of Nasomo, officially proclaimed illegal. A protracted legal battle validated the CSR's claim to the land and confirmed the status of the traditional owners to be that of mere squatters. The dispute was a particularly sensitive one no doubt, for as the Fijians themselves insist today, the five families who had moved from their village site in the hills down to the coastal plain under the influence of the controversial methodist minister the Rev. A.D. Lelean, had done so in order 'to look for gold'. This they did at least two years before Borthwick made his strike.

In the case of the Yanawai field, state objectives were expressed in radical changes to the 1908 Mining Ordinance. The ordinance specified that any land required for mining purposes be bought by the government and for this reason alone was profoundly embarrassing, as Fletcher admitted. That it was incumbent upon his administration to retrieve some 2,000 acres from the CSR and Fijian land owners at Mt Kasi was politically unacceptable. This being so, the logistics of avoiding the financial liabilities of the ordinance were complex. And the expropriation of Fijian land, which the new draft legislation sanctioned in 1934, raised additional problems. The Mining Board's Chairman, C.A. Holmes, urged that the government assume control of any native land required for mining purposes by absorbing it within the dubious but conveniently elastic category of 'Crown land'. In this way, it would be spared the ignominy and cost of having to purchase thousands of acres, and there would be less chance of inflaming Fijian opinion. It would be impolitic, he insisted, to claim mining land under the Native Lands
Ordinance as the 1908 Mining Ordinance implied for this would 'set a bad precedent and may create a difficult position'; there was every chance that the Fijian landowners would refuse to surrender control. Holmes's message was unambiguous: it made both political and economic sense to dispossess the Fijians through the amended mining legislation.  

In order to permit land alienation as mining leasehold, the legal provisions for state acquisition were thus changed drastically in 1934. Three separate but mutually supporting clauses in the new ordinance endorsed expropriation of any land required for the exploitation of mineral resources. All precious metals and minerals were declared the property of the Crown; any land could be proclaimed a mining area by the Governor; and the Governor in Council could, without granting compensation for subterranean wealth, assume control of any land deemed necessary for public purposes.  

The administration was sensitive to the spurious legitimacy of its claim to 'ownership' of mineral wealth. But while prepared for a possible backlash from the Fijians, it anticipated that they would probably be ignorant of the implications of clause four of the Mining Ordinance which claimed all metals and minerals for the Crown, and that they would not, therefore, contest the ordinance. In the unlikely event of opposition, the government could easily justify its action, the Colonial Secretary argued: the Fijians had laid no claim to of the subsurface value of land they had ceded to Britain in 1874, nor was there any record of their own attempts to capitalise its mineral wealth. Not so confident of the credulity of the European landowners, the government contrived to secure an easy
Another important change to the colony's mining legislation affected the compensation - royalty and rent - payable upon the alienation of land. By repealing clause 23 of the 1908 ordinance which stipulated that royalty be paid to landowners, and instead allocating both subsurface rent (i.e. fees for mining leases) and royalty to general revenue, the state withdrew from the Fijians the right to any compensation for the exploitation of the colony's mineral wealth.  

In their draft form, the 1934 regulations provided for the payment of 25% of revenue from royalties to the landowners; but pressure from the Legal Committee of the Imperial Institute seems to have influenced the decision to revoke this by the time the bill was in its final form. Evidently, political sensitivities saw to it that the idea of a 25% concession was not entirely abandoned. In the event of intractable Fijian opposition, the Secretary for Native Affairs, at least, saw it as a last resort. Ultimately, the only compensation conceded was the payment of surface rent and this was required by the Native Lands Ordinance in respect of all land alienated under leasehold tenure.

The new ordinance struck another blow at Fijian landowners and in so doing helped to minimise the early production costs of the mining industry. Lease or licence holders were permitted to clear land and utilise the timber resources of 'unimproved', unalienated (i.e. Fijian owned) land where trees were not of a protected species. No royalty payments were required. This arrangement did not extend to
holders of mining leases over 'alienated' (i.e. European or Crown) land. Even before the enactment of the ordinance, the government's reaction to an early submission by the Mt Kasi Mining Company was indicative of the direction its policy was to take. In June 1931, the company requested permission to build a road through native land to permit the transportation of machinery and plant from the riverbank to the site of its mine, a distance of some four and a half miles. The official chief of the province, the Roko Tui Cakaudrove, was instructed to 'arrange' for the permission of the local landowners to be granted to the company. In return, the government pledged that:

If mining operations prove successful Government will purchase mining area from owners for development purposes...Natives and Colony will benefit greatly by opening up of land as mining area. 15

The 1934 ordinance proved the promise to be an empty one. The land did not have to be bought and the owners reaped no financial benefit from the proclamation of a gold field over the area. In 1931, their land was cleared by the company and a road was built; no compensation was paid for the deforestation that occurred in the process. 16

State patronage or protection, as expressed in the mining laws, was thus conspicuously directed towards European landowners and mining capital. Fijian economic interests were, by contrast, subordinated to specific mining needs and the general economic objectives of the colonial government. The Fijians were not oblivious to the discriminatory provisions of the mining laws, but their access to information was limited and their challenge lacked the coordinated support base necessary to have any real impact on official policy.
In 1935, for example, a deputation from the village of Navuso in Naitasiri to the Provincial Commissioner asked if the interests of natives who owned most of the land in the Colony, were being watched carefully by the Government, in connection with the discovery of gold in Fiji. 

The matter was taken up with the Mining Board whose reply, curiously dated three years later, declared somewhat defensively that there were already 'adequate safeguards' for 'native' interests in the existing legislation. In 1936, a motion put up to the Council of Chiefs by the Buli Nadi requested 'remuneration to natives in such cases where gold is found on their land'. Evidently the motion was not endorsed by the Council for it did not appear amongst the formal resolutions that year.

Its commitment to expansion and development of a capitalist economy obliged the state to shape its administration of the new mining industry according to the best perceived means of securing a healthy profit margin. Political intervention thus became an assertive attempt to create conditions congenial to the emergence of an industrial monopoly. This was demonstrated, above all, in the systematic removal of those smaller mining concerns which did not withdraw voluntarily as the gold rush petered out. The mining policy of the early 1930's principally sought to curb speculation and centralise administration of the infant industry. These two objectives were mutually supportive for, as Fletcher argued, stringent control was essential if unscrupulous types or mere speculators were to be prevented from reaping the rewards of other people's initiative and labour. He was singleminded in his belief that
the government should exercise strict control over mineral deposits. The man who prospects and makes a discovery is entitled to the reward of his enterprise, but I see no reason why all and sundry should follow on his heels and claim to divide among themselves wealth found in other people's land to which they have no shadow of claim. 20

Fletcher's preoccupation with the problem intensified over the next two years as did his determination to rid the colony of the kind of 'distasteful' speculation which only lost it a large amount of 'legitimate' revenue. By 'transfer[ing] Crown property to Australian speculators', he alleged, 'men of straw without means or mining experience' were levying between 10% and 20% of capital invested. 21 In 1934, he insisted that future applications for prospecting licences in the Yanawai area be referred to him personally. Writing to the Colonial Office later that year, he was clearly convinced that those who had applied for licences in areas adjacent to the Mt Kasi strike were merely fortune hunters without capital, and it was evident that their intention was merely to acquire rights which they could later sell to the highest bidder in the event of the Yanawai syndicate's investigations proving successful. 22

He was all too aware that a similar situation of rampant speculation had already developed on the Tavua field. 23

A year later, Fletcher requested metropolitan approval for the introduction of compulsory registration (with the Mining Board) and stamp duty on all agreements as a way of increasing government control over transactions. This meant that all private transfers required the approval of the Board. The measures met with vociferous opposition from the European Legislative Council members, particularly Sir Henry Scott who represented numerous companies; but
with the permission of the Secretary of State, Fletcher used the official majority to push through the controversial amendments. The institutional controls vested in the Governor and the limited jurisdiction of the Mining Board exemplified the centralised organisation that Fletcher had in mind. On the surface, the Board appeared to have quite considerable responsibilities. It was required to issue prospectors rights, prospectors licences and mining leases, to administer safety regulations and to ensure general compliance with the mining law. In policy matters, however, it functioned only in an advisory capacity. Even its decision-making role in respect of the issue of titles was curtailed by clauses requiring the Governor's sanction. In January 1936, Fletcher sought Legislative Council approval for a new mining bill which appointed the Governor as Chairman of the Mining Board. Indignant about this, the European members refused to give their support at committee stage, insisting that the Governor should remain an independent authority to whom the Board might refer only on important policy matters.

Through various provisions of the colony's mining law, the state discriminated in favour of the larger mining concerns: the enormous size of the proclaimed areas, the inflated fees, and the extensive alienation of land under prospecting or mining title were amongst these. An informed and outspoken critic of government policy, specifically of the assumptions on which it was based, was the first Inspector of Mines, J.F. Grieve. He challenged Fletcher's belief that the auriferous lodes of the Tavua mining area stretched over a great distance and that their discovery therefore depended on 'skilled men' and 'much capital'. Ridiculing the sheer size of
the proclaimed Tavua field - originally 105,000 acres - which was one result of this misconception, Grieve argued that it was geologically absurd to suggest that the ore-bodies already disclosed in the vicinity of the Emperor mine would extend beyond 1,000 acres; if other payable mines were to be discovered in such a vast area, they would constitute distinct and autonomous lodes.28

Discrimination in favour of the big companies was apparent in the large acreage of land alienated under prospecting licence and in the fact that a number of prospecting licences over adjacent areas could be accumulated. Huge single holdings of 500 acres were granted while combined holdings aggregated thousands of acres - 'most improper' to Grieve's mind.29 Restrictions on the size of tenements were easily circumvented by different members of a family or individual members of a syndicate or corporate concern applying for separate titles.30 Two extreme cases of large holdings were those of Whitehall Securities Co Ltd and Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd. In 1934, the former was granted a licence over 2,400 acres31 while the latter at one stage held fourteen areas totalling 6,000 acres. Even the company's director acknowledged that this was '...in itself the size of a goldfield'.32

Other instances of official support for larger scale mining operations included the stringent conditions that governed the issue of licences. A licence holder had, for example, to 'vigorously and continuously prosecute prospecting operations to the satisfaction of the Board', the likely cost of which was probably well beyond the means of the ordinary prospector.33 The capital requirements stipulated by the Mining Board after 1935 combined to make it more than likely that the small man would be forced to sell part or all
of his title to a large company better able to meet the conditions. The 1934 mining regulations, moreover, increased royalty from 1/- per ounce of gold to the 'iniquitous extortion' of a 5% tax imposed on the gross value of gold produced. While this further penalised those with small profit margins or those running at a loss, regulation 79 - empowering the Governor in Council to reduce royalty - was used to the exclusive advantage of the Theodore and Mt Kasi companies. 34

It was little wonder that Grieve's antipathy to the mining legislation should not be shared by the larger companies themselves. The Pacific Gold NL responded with alacrity, declaring that

The Government of Fiji is to be congratulated on its promptness in taking action to protect the good name of the Colony and the interests of the investors. Stringent regulations govern prospectors; licences, and the granting of leases. They discourage unjustified speculation and insure, as far as possible, the efficient handling and adequate capitalisation of companies which propose to develop the field.

The protective measures being applied must act as an inducement to investors to provide the capital necessary for the ultimate development of the field if early indications are confirmed. 35

Theodore also welcomed the legislation as 'liberal' in content and 'sympathetic' in application. 36 A gratuity of £5,000 made over to the government by his syndicate following the enactment of the mining ordinance was a timely act of charity to be sure! 37 The support of Theodore as well as that of other 'reputable' mining capitalists no doubt helped to explain Fletcher's defiance of criticism. In August 1935, he remarked that 'several of the more reputable people from Australia' had declared that Fiji's policy was 'much sounder' than that applied in Australia, adding 'I have every intention of retaining complete control.' 38
Metropolitan support for Fletcher's strategy was also wholehearted. Indeed, not simply quiescent, the Colonial Office itself urged a policy of 'encouraging larger mining interests and gradually eliminating smaller interests'. This would ensure that the production of gold would not be prejudiced by an indiscriminate scramble for prospecting licences. In practical terms, this meant that small, speculative licences should be terminated on expiry and subsequent applications 'rigorously scrutinised'; licences were to 'cover as large an area as practicable' and be confined to 'reputable and well-equipped companies'. The activities of the individual prospector were to be further curtailed by the recommendation that licence fees be increased.\(^3\)

Changes to the mining legislation in 1935 reflected the emerging strategy. Under the amended regulation 10 of the principal ordinance, every applicant for a prospecting licence within a proclaimed mining area was required to 'show to the satisfaction of the Board that he possesses or commands sufficient working capital to ensure the proper prospecting and development of the area for which he applies';\(^4\) an amendment to regulation 11 provided that in circumstances of competition for title to an area, the first claimant would not be successful if he did not comply with these requirements.\(^5\) Though the declared intention of both amendments was 'to provide a greater measure of control over the issue of prospecting licences within proclaimed mining areas,\(^6\) the principle of highest bidding became the implicit formula for large scale capitalisation of the industry. With 'the object of discouraging applicants of doubtful financial standing and of increasing the value of licences by making them more difficult to obtain', an increase in licence fees over areas within proclaimed...
areas was also prescribed. This had an almost immediate effect. The majority of applications in the Tavua area were withdrawn while some of the more persistent applicants found their requests rejected by the Mining Board on the grounds of inadequate capital or failure to provide sufficient evidence of gold in payable quantities.

Certain other amendments to the legislation around this time represented the liberalisation rather than the entrenchment of adopted policy. In the space of two years, for example, the proclaimed Tavua field was reduced from 105,000 acres to 9,000 acres and the Yanawai area from 50,000 acres to 4,500 acres. Behind this massive scaling down it might have been perceived that the high fees for inordinately large areas threatened to inhibit prospecting outside the proven ore-bodies; but the reduction was not enough to steer enterprise beyond the exploitation and development of the original discoveries. Indeed by 1937, it was to this unpalatable reality that the colony's English language daily newspaper, the Fiji Times and Herald, drew attention. Offended by official discrimination against the pioneer, the paper criticised the mining ordinance and regulations for their control of speculation, high licence fees, and other penalties against the small prospector which had conspired to restrict the industry's development. Overall, it struck a solemn note of warning:

There is a saying that if one watches the pennies the pounds will look after themselves. Protect the prospector and his discoveries, and thousands of pounds for development will flow in of its own accord. Deprive prospectors of the just rewards of their prospecting and mining in Fiji will wither at its very roots.

Between 1937 and 1945, changes in line with this thinking were made, the government's declared aim being 'to encourage and assist the
prospector and the "small man" by all reasonable means'. The cuts in prospecting and mining fees, the various production incentives including the temporary remission of import duties, reduced assay fees and free technical advice, and the government subsidies paid to selected prospectors and small scale operators, were amongst the most significant of these. For the first time, financial reward was offered for the discovery of payable mineral deposits. This unprecedented assistance to the 'small man' was now seen as crucial for the expansion of the industry. By 1940, the Director of Lands could announce to the Legislative Council:

That this policy is bearing fruit is indicated by the marked increase in the prospecting activity shown during the last few months. 50

Dilatory concessions of this kind could not stem the decline of competitive activities, and the modification of state mining policy had a negligible impact on the monopolistic structure of the industry. This was not to say that the associated companies did not have to work conscientiously to ensure that the revival of prospecting by 'mere speculators' did not imperil their hegemony in the Tavua basin. 51 To their dismay, the interest of two Canadian mining companies for example — Pioneer Gold Mines BC and South Pacific Mining Company — was seen as a positive development by the administration in the aftermath of the war. The official view was that an extension of the Theodore monopoly was likely to retard an increase in gold output and was thus inimical to the economic development of the colony. And the government was not oblivious to the tendency of the companies to '...acquire as much land as possible without increasing [their] rate of production'. 52
The appointment of Sir Alexander Grantham as Governor appeared to be a particular source of irritation for the group. In 1946, the Mining Board rejected its application for prospecting licences over some 3,250 acres. The Governor's decision to uphold this elicited an unflattering opinion from Theodore's right hand man and general manager, Nils Nilsen:

Although I get along very well with Grantham he would not set the world on fire with any original ideas and abides strictly to regulation red tape methods. He does not appear to have any guts and is just guided by usual Government procedure...

Personally I think the Government here today is the weakest and most unrealistic we have had since I have been here...

Far from dispirited, still less deterred by the obstructiveness of the post-war administration, the companies took their case direct - by grace of Theodore - to the Colonial Office.

Theodore's submissions found favour with the home government. To local mining officials, this indicated a shift in imperial priorities towards a long term production policy. Though the Mining Board had not been advised of what mining policy was to be, complained the Acting Inspector of Mines, the strategy of (short term) output maximisation pursued during the war looked to be replaced by planned development based on 'an increase in the life of the Associated Mines'. To Grantham's mind, on the other hand, the Secretary of State had simply been fooled:

Clauson's letter leaves me cold. He has been gullible enough to accept as gospel truth all that Mr T told him.

Whatever it stirred in the way of cynicism or confusion, metropolitan initiatives ultimately helped to safeguard the group's monopoly over gold production. The Mining Board's unconditional
rejection of its application for additional prospecting land was revoked and it won 'protection' in the area under claim for a period of three years. 58

The prospects of dealing with a more sympathetic local administration looked decidedly encouraging by late 1947. With Sir Brian Freeston's appointment as Governor in succession to Grantham, the companies were optimistic that the protracted review of official mining policy would be concluded in their favour. In spite of his limited experience of goldmining, Freeston's 'comprehension' and 'appreciation' of the considerable benefits to the empire of a healthy industry were salutory indications of this. Early in 1948, a visit to the mines left him 'so much impressed with what he saw and heard that he expressed the desire to come back and spend a few days with us...'. 59 Soon after, Nilsen made the tedious trip to Suva to ascertain the government's intentions over taxation, royalty and customs tariffs. The meeting was a fruitful one and he was encouraged enough to conclude that the Governor '[appeared] most anxious to assist and encourage the goldmining industry and I am sure it is more than talk.' 60

Tariff concessions were approved in December 1948, 61 but all was not in fact plain sailing. Britain's revised master plan for gold production in her colonies unfortunately included a new royalty formula. Like Tanganyika, Fiji was a chosen guinea pig. From 1949, therefore, a sliding scale of payment tying royalty to the profitability of a mine replaced the fixed levy that had, until then, calculated royalty as a proportion of revenue. The change was explicitly designed to foster long term planning; to discourage high grading and short term profiteering; and to command a more
proportionate return to the colony from the deposits of rich ore being mined. In all these respects, it pierced the heart of the group's production and financial policies. (see section V) Royalty scales were low compared with those of other colonies but the local system of 'double taxation', allegedly placing local mining '...on a comparable basis with the South African colonies', provoked loud and repeated protests. Even after the Colonial Office had confirmed that it would not consider repealing the royalty legislation, the group appealed in both the Legislative and Executive Councils, ably represented by several European members including Sir Hugh Ragg who had his own mining interests. Ragg put up an impressive plea for 'equitability of taxation' for a group of companies who were not only '...the best employers in the Colony in regard to all sections of the community' but who had also '...done a wonderful job of work in this Colony'.

Nilsen did not withdraw from the front line. Early in 1950, he arranged for an interview with the Colonial Secretary and other officials, and made a 'courtesy call' on the Acting Governor (Stoddart). He advised that due to such heavy taxation, Emperor would be 'compelled' to abandon its plans for prospecting outside Vatukoula. Nilsen was no diplomat and his dealings with the administration were marked on this, like other occasions, by heavy handed tactics and undisguised ultimatums. Nicknamed 'Bruiser', he was to continue through the 1950's to talk of 'putting pressure on the government', perceiving the prudence of raising the spectre of a complete close-down whenever he sought financial favours on behalf of the group. He had the perseverance if not the patience of a
skilled tactician. Although often irritating to the government, his belligerent manner and bulldozing technique proved a successful combination.

The ruling of the Colonial Office was not to be taken as final, and under pressure from the mining lobby, the local government did indeed resume discussions with the Secretary of State. The Mining (Amendment) Ordinance of 1952 represented a major coup for the group, broadening the range of items which could be charged as costs against royalty, raising the profit yield ceilings at which royalty was assessed, and reducing the rates themselves. After a spectacular rise in government revenue earned from mining royalties between 1949 and 1951, the steady decline in income from 1952 owed much to these concessions. (see chapter seven)
The transition from competitive to monopoly production of gold occurred in just a few years. The speed and success with which this took place owed much to the integrated working relationship between the colonial state and mining capital. Undoubtedly, the associated companies were well represented by their own men - Theodore and Nilsen most notably - but it was also the case that in the years before the war the mining lobby functioned with remarkable agility under the management of a small caucus of Europeans with diverse business interests and above all with political influence: men like Sir Maynard Hedstrom, Sir Henry Scott, and to a lesser extent Robert Crompton and Sir Henry Marks.

The growth of the goldmining industry offered the large and powerful merchant companies which dominated the commercial sector - Morris Hedstrom, Burns Philp and W.R. Carpenter - opportunities for expanded wholesale and retail trade and shipping. The establishment of a township at Tavua to service the Vatukoula community drew their retail market into a previously unpenetrated part of the colony. Early in 1935, Morris Hedstrom was appointed shipping and forwarding agent for the Theodore group of companies. The volume and diversity of imported plant, equipment and materials needed for the mining and processing of gold offered a welcome boost to the firm's revenue in the wake of the Depression. As agent, the company was also responsible for the transportation of Fijian contract labour from distant areas like Lau, Kadavu and Vanua Levu. And it was early granted an exclusive right to set up a retail store at the mines. As Hedstrom put it himself, the commercial relationship between
Morris Hedstrom and the associated companies was to be 'fairly close' and the companies were 'valued customers of ours'. To similar advantage, Burns Philp acted as agent for the Vatukaisia company in the Yanawai.

The mutuality of economic interests between mining and merchant capital was bolstered by a shared employment etiquette: on invitation, the Theodore group joined Morris Hedstrom, Burns Philp and other firms in an informal agreement not to poach each other's (skilled) workers. This inhibited the mobility of this section of the labour force; and, apart from discouraging the 'unfriendliness' of competing for labour or 'stealing' as Hedstrom described it, the agreement had the obvious advantage of helping the companies to fend off industrial demands. (see chapters four and six)

The political influence of 'a small handful of legal and commercial obligarchs' comprising Hedstrom, Scott, Marks and Crompton - the 'Big Four' as they were dubbed by Colonial Secretary Barton - was well established at the inception of goldmining. The first impressions of Sir Arthur Richards in 1937 conveyed an unequivocal disapproval of the 'stranglehold' they had successfully maintained over the colony for some twenty years:

As I begin to settle down here things take on a more solid shape. It is a peculiar Colony - sui generis indeed. The presence of a resident European population, their long isolation from the world and the limitation even of recent contacts to NZ & Australia has bred a particular insularity of its own. A few big men have obtained a stranglehold on the place - they have won their way to the top and mean to stay there. The underdog is under-paid and powerless. A few men control every thing behind the scenes and even Govt has been run with a strong bias.
Hedstrom and Marks were both large landowners and closely associated with the firm of Morris Hedstrom, Hedstrom as its founder and managing director and Marks as a principal shareholder and director. Marks was founder and head of the merchant company Henry Marks & Co. Ltd. which had been taken over by Morris Hedstrom in 1920. A 'very able and quite unscrupulous' man, as he was described by Barton, Hedstrom had various other merchandise and shipping interests apart from Morris Hedstrom, while Marks, as a landlord in the capital, enjoyed a significant income from 'rack renting his wretched wood & iron hovels...'.

Scott's political career was complemented by a well established legal practice although it was alleged he had never passed a law examination. He made 'his money out of land deals, money lending transactions and Indian litigation.' In his legal capacity, he represented Hedstrom, Marks and the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd. Crompton, a longstanding resident, was also a director of Morris Hedstrom and, as a practising lawyer, represented Hedstrom and Marks as well as the company.

The close business association of Hedstrom, Scott and Crompton was strengthened by their social ties and intermarriage between the Hedstrom and Crompton families. And apart from the many years which they had collected between them as members of the Legislative Council, their influence on colonial policy was assured by their appointments to the Executive Council and Crompton's assistance in drafting the early mining legislation. Although Scott was not nominated to the Legislative Council after 1937, he won an elected seat, and remained until 1939 an unofficial member of the Executive Council, 'a suitable place for the Emeritus Professors of the art of political log-rolling'. Together, the four men posed a formidable vanguard which guaranteed for the dominant merchant and agricultural
concerns, command over the direction and character of official policy: 'They have their differences, they have them still', Barton acknowledged in 1938, 'but collectively they worked together and I doubt if in any small Colony there were such astute individuals. In short they terrorised the Civil Service, so far as I can make out, from top to bottom.'

Goldmining extended the mandates of Hedstrom, Scott and Crompton beyond representation of the merchant and sugar companies. And the influence they brought to bear on colonial mining policy between 1934 and 1937 was crucial. Although Hedstrom welcomed the financial benefits for Morris Hedstrom of a thriving mining industry, a personal interest in several prospecting and mining ventures also explained his untiring efforts on their behalf. A director of three of the companies controlled by the Theodore group – Koroere Gold NL, Emperor Gold Mining Co Ltd, and Loloma Gold Mines NL – as well as Pacific Gold NL which operated in Tavua, Rewa, Matuku Island and Wainivesi, he had, in addition, large shareholdings in a number of other companies including Koroere Pacific Gold, Tavua Gold Developments Ltd and Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd.

Scott also held a sizeable stake as director of four large mining companies – Tavua Gold Options Ltd, Tavua Gold Developments, Mineral Developments and Mt Kasi – and owned shares in all of these as well as others. In his legal capacity, he represented thirteen mining companies including the Theodore group. Grieve cynically remarked that the Mining Ordinance and Regulations of 1934 were so complicated that they required legal assistance to understand them; and that because of this
One of the most profitable occupations in Suva since mining began, must have been that of the lawyer...I have been told the lawyers' services, also included, expediting Government decisions. 15

Even Fletcher conceded that Scott's membership of the Executive Council placed him in a very effective position to influence government mining policy. 16

The speculative interests of Sir Henry Marks and Robert Crompton were not as extensive but still significant. Marks directed one mining company, East Reefs Consolidated NL, and invested in a number of others. Crompton, on the other hand, represented several companies including the discredited Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL, and held shares in Mt Kasi Mines Ltd, Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd, Tavua Gold Development Ltd and probably others. 17 His position on the Executive Council and contribution to the framing of mining law in the early 1930's would have made him an attractive 'investment', like Scott, for the many concerns seeking legal advice and favours.

So persistent were the 'Big Four', especially Hedstrom and Scott, in bidding for political favours that Grieve boldly suggested that it was their influence that lay behind Fletcher's adoption of such a 'strange' and 'unorthodox mining policy'. Pondering the question of 'why an Ordinance so unsuited to your mining, and so difficult to administer had been created', he concluded that

all the errors, which have arisen were caused by a series of unfortunate misconceptions of mines and mining, developed perhaps, by the intentional efforts of selfish individuals (unofficial) interested in the gold mining activities in the Colony. 18
On the other hand, Scott and Hedstrom had reservations about the wholesale commitment to big capital. Early in 1934, Scott expressed his doubts to a well-established Australian financier and mining magnate, Sir Colin Fraser, whom Fletcher was soon to consult about his mining formula for Fiji:

> You will learn more from HE about his idea of mining than I can write you but shortly put he appears to be wanting to make as much as possible for the Colony out of any mining and I am rather inclined to think that he will overdo it unless restrained and further his views rather tend towards big companies and not encouraging the small fry.

...My own view is that goldmining should be encouraged in every possible way.

Hedstrom too regarded Fletcher's policy with a certain reserve, mindful of the restrictions on capital accumulation that could well follow its application. He urged 'that nothing should be done which is likely to frighten capital away – let us, at this stage, receive everyone with open arms'. But, despite their misgivings, both men supported the 1934 mining bill which later that year received the unanimous endorsement of the Executive Council.

Prospecting operations demanded paper work as well as perseverance, the first in respect of applications for licences and their extensions or transfers, and the second on account of bureaucratic delays and mismanagement. The latter was inevitable perhaps in any administrative operation of size, but was especially evident in the 1930's because the newly constituted Mining Board was unprofessional and inexperienced. Hedstrom's services to Theodore's companies relieved them of much of the burden of tiresome formalities and offered them expeditious and generally favourable consideration of their submissions. On numerous occasions, Hedstrom enjoyed private discussions with the Governor; he was privy to government decisions.
and intentions as a member of the Executive Council and was therefore able to keep the companies closely informed. As the following letter to Theodore demonstrates, he was well aware of his obligations as company director:

I am sure you will forgive me for writing this frankly but whilst my knowledge of world affairs is not comparable with yours I have a very intimate knowledge of the local Government and as your co-Director, I think I should give you the benefit of that knowledge.

In May 1935, Hedstrom learnt that the government was looking critically at Theodore's failure to comply with the work requirements specified by the mining ordinance on one of his prospecting licences. He knew that the possible consequences were grave: cancellation of the licence or a decision not to approve its extension. He urged Theodore to begin prospecting work without further delay. In the same year, he pre-empted another move which would have had costly repercussions for the group. The government's intention to prohibit the consignment of gold by mail represented a surrender to the demands of the shipping companies who were bent on forcing the mining companies to freight gold in their vessels at exorbitant rates. Theodore was outraged and bid Hedstrom make every effort to get the prohibition idea dropped. Hedstrom succeeded in doing this.

Around the middle of the year, Theodore complained of the high rate of customs duty imposed on certain products that were essential to the assaying, mining and milling of gold. He asked Hedstrom to

...make representations to the Authorities with a view to having the Custom's duties on the said items abolished, or substantially reduced.
More familiar with the prevailing official view that 'many circumstances are favourable here - particularly cost of labour' and that 'the increased population and the development of the mines will necessitate substantial expenditure by the Government in various directions', Hedstrom advised that the matter be temporarily shelved.27 Having sat on a Tariff Revision Committee appointed in November 1932, he was also acquainted with the controversy that surrounded the tariff question. It was clearly a question of timing to his mind, and by the end of 1936 when Theodore approached him again, he was willing to assist in presenting the companies' case to the Governor. His caution was not misplaced and the request for a reduction in duties confirmed that there were still tensions and conflicting views within the administration over the general matter of tariffs. The Colonial Office had adopted the radical view that 'any kind of machinery or implement which is required to facilitate agricultural industrial or mineral production' should be admitted duty free if supplied from within the Empire or, if unobtainable therein, from a 'foreign source'. The proposal was soundly defeated in Fiji and the differential between British and foreign imports maintained.28 There was also some local resistance to approving for the mining industry additional assistance to that already granted in the form of remitted and deferred payments of customs dues.29 A.L. Armstrong, Personal Assistant to the Colonial Secretary, went so far as to suggest that the heavy capitalisation of Emperor Mines Ltd and the generous sum it had paid to purchase the assets of the Theodore syndicate was proof that it was

satisfied that the assets they were purchasing were of very great value and would no doubt return them a handsome profit. The present applications for concessions seem to me to be somewhat inconsistent with the terms upon which the Company was floated. 30
It took some nine months for a verdict to be reached on the group's submission but, with one exception, it emerged as a conclusive victory: British tariffs on machinery and requisites (including explosives) were both reduced by 50% (from 15% to 7½% and from 20% to 10% respectively) and general tariffs fell by 25% (from 30% to 22½% and 40% to 30% respectively). As the Comptroller of Customs was to argue later when faced with Nilsen's complaints that the tariff schedule was not sufficiently comprehensive, a Government cannot go further in the realm of courtesy than permit a potential beneficiary [ie Theodore] to draft a Tariff item.

The state's contribution to the early infrastructural development of the industry also worked to the decided advantage of the Theodore group. The establishment of a township at Tavua, complete with government offices and social services, subsidised the expansion of the growing mining settlement at Vatukoula, as did the construction of a wharf at Vatia Point, some seventeen miles from the mines in 1938. Both of these developments owed something to Hedstrom's and Scott's political skills and much to the fact that 'the merchants' interests, the important sugar interests, and the mining interests met as one in the recommendation'. In November 1935, following a motion put to the Legislative Council by Hedstrom, a Committee was appointed by the Governor to look into the question of 'whether the Government should provide improved facilities for the landing and delivery of cargo for the mining companies and traders in the Tavua area'; and to 'consider the question of the establishment of a Government controlled township at Tavua'. On Hedstrom's advice, the Committee included Theodore, H. King Irving, the Attorney in Fiji for the CSR, Sir Hugh Ragg and himself.
The recommendations of the committee came as no surprise. In view of the benefits to the state from taxation of the mining industry, the group's submission was considered 'not unreasonable, provided the cost to the Government would not be excessive'; the government should assist in providing transportation and landing facilities near Tavua; and in 'the interests of the community and of the public health', a township with social, medical and recreational facilities in addition to government services and trading stores, was imperative.

Occupying the position of Officer Administering the Government following Fletcher's departure from the colony, Barton was perspicacious as well as candid. In a telegram to the Secretary of State, he offered an incisive interpretation of this collective bid for state patronage. The 'incessant' pressure of his 'unofficial advisers', he protested, was fuelled by their own 'private interests'. The erection of a government wharf at Vatia would be seen as a hallmark of security and evidence of the Government's belief in the future of Theodore's Mine thus sending up the shares and enabling interested parties to sell at peak price.

Construction of the wharf at the alternative site of Lautoka, the sugar centre some 45 miles from the mines, would not, Barton charged, have the desired effect of reducing operating costs for the Theodore group and would 'force certain local commercial interests to move buildings...[to] where their competitors are already established.' In this regard, it made economic sense for the CSR to flex its political muscle in support of the mining lobby because it would not wish to see its 'monopolistic' control of the sugar industry undermined by construction of a government wharf at Lautoka.
Barton's views did not, however, alter the fact that the government's consent to the twin proposals would be dictated by its own objectives for colonial development. The sugar and mining companies provided much needed revenue and though

Neither are philanthropic institutions...if cheaper gold mining is desirable at the present time from an Imperial standpoint then as inexpensive a wharf as possible should be built at Vatia... 39

The outcome was thus a favourable if conservative one for the Theodore group. The government undertook to erect at the companies' expense a wharf and pipeline at Vatia. In addition, it agreed to construct and pay for three miles of connecting road at an estimated cost of £5,500. It was to hold a three year option to retain or refund at cost price the wharf and pipeline; and during this period would be responsible for the maintenance and administrative costs of the wharf. The companies were not required to pay wharfage fees and priority would be given to them until the government option was exercised. 40

The early capitalisation and control of the Mt Kasi mining venture testified to further links between merchant and mining capital in the colony. Although the overwhelming majority of shareholders in Mt Kasi Mines Ltd was Australian and to a lesser extent Canadian and New Zealand, the original prospecting syndicate which made the strike included four prominent officials in Burns Philp (SS) Company Ltd, two of whom - Captain G.P. Donovan and Alan O. Mackenzie - were master of vessels and local manager. When in 1930 the syndicate was transformed into a public company, Vatukaisia Mining Co Ltd, Mackenzie was appointed a director. He retained this office when Mt Kasi Mines Ltd was incorporated in November 1933. In 1935, Donovan and the Mackenzie family both held 4,400 shares each in Mt Kasi
Mines Ltd. Through the successive stages in its reconstruction, then, the foundation for cooperation between a principal mining enterprise and another of the large trading and shipping houses was secured. Mackenzie's appointment as 'agent in Suva' for the Vatukaisia Company strengthened the tie and undoubtedly increased the financial benefits that accrued to Burns Philp. He became a chief spokesman in matters of mining policy and legislation, urging the amendment of restrictive clauses of the 1908 Mining Ordinance in 1931, and spearheading the push for tariff reduction in 1932.

With the formation of Mt Kasi Mines Ltd at the end of 1933, Scott's efforts to secure it favourable operating conditions, particularly through reduced customs dues and secure mining titles, came to match Hedstrom's lobbying for the Theodore group. Holding a weighty stake of 4,000 shares whose face value was about £1,000, he was understandably committed to promoting the company's expansion. Fanciful thoughts of great fortune encouraged him to try to persuade Sir Colin Fraser to move one of his large companies, Gold Mines of Australia Ltd, into the Yanawai with a view to an ultimate takeover of Mt Kasi. Even the possibility of the company extending its interests into the Tavua area was considered seriously, albeit briefly.

But unpromising geological surveys of both areas in the end advised against large scale investment, and in the case of Mt Kasi, exposed a rather more shady saga. In 1934, it was disclosed that 'the level some 80 feet below the adit is a dud - showing only a couple of isolated bunches of ore'. Scott panicked. Confidential information from his Sydney 'friends' confirmed his worst fears - that the Mt Kasi lode was of dubious value and that
the object of Mitchell and Robertson [Director] is to 'freeze out' everyone else and get the whole thing into their hands...Presumably the idea is to get a good report from Jackson [Engineer] and then after getting all the shares in their own hands Mr Mitchell and Mr Robertson will 'get out' 46

Though convinced that he should sell out quickly, it was difficult to make a decision in Suva 'without running some risk'. Scott accordingly entreated Fraser to help him anticipate the market price of the company's shares in order that he be spared the calamity of selling out at a loss. 47

Scott's relationship with Australian capitalists was not of course one-sided and, as noted above, he was seen as a useful and influential mediator by many prospecting and mining ventures. The attempt by Sir Charles Marr to interest the Theodore group in a company formed to investigate sources of hydroelectric power in the Tavua area was a case in point. A prominent Australian politician who had held a range of key Federal portfolios including Defence and Home & Territories, Marr was a director of the two major competitors of the Theodore group on the Tavua field - Mineral Developments Fiji Ltd and Tavua Gold Options Development Ltd. 48 In 1935, he offered Scott 5,000 shares to place locally in his new power company. Both Scott and Hedstrom bought small holdings and, on Marr's instructions, a financial proposition was put to Theodore. 49 Scott's efforts were, however, in vain for neither Theodore nor Packer (with whom Marr negotiated in Sydney) was prepared to concede a vendor's share consideration in the takeover proposed. 50 The associated group established its own power supply the following year.
V The Theodore Group: Structure and Profitability

The capital structure of the associated group was striking for its concentration of shares in the hands of a small band of business associates. Of the 1,900,000 shares issued to provide the holding company, Emperor Gold Mines Ltd, with a subscribed capital of £A950,000, 950,000 were distributed amongst the original partners and shareholders of its operating company, Emperor Gold Mining Co Ltd – Theodore, Wren, Cody, Packer and a few others – and 900,000 taken up by one other associated Melbourne company.¹ The small balance of 50,000 shares (2.6%) was offered for 'public' subscription.

Emperor's two sister companies shared the structural features of its capitalisation as well as a number of its investors. The Loloma (Fiji) Gold Mines NL was financed on a more modest scale of £A206,250 but over 70% of its 825,000 issued shares was retained by the Theodore, Wren and Cody-based partnership; 150,000 shares were allotted to a group of London financiers through Melbourne stockbrokers Messrs E.L. and C. Baillieu; and a balance of 75,000 registered for the 'public' on the Australian stock exchanges. Until 1947, when it was reconstructed as a public company (Dolphin Mines Ltd) and the Emperor company acquired all its issued shares, the entire capital of Fiji Mines Development which operated the richest of the three mines was privately subscribed: Theodore, Wren, Cody and Packer together held about 80% of its 10,000 issued shares.²

As the reconstruction of Emperor in 1935 demonstrated, the concentration of ownership in the two public companies gave the holding interests considerable speculative advantages.³ Emperor
Mines Ltd was incorporated as a parent company to acquire its 100,000 £1 shares. There was, however, no direct transfer of shares or capital between the companies but an indirect transaction by way of a dummy company with the unlikely name of T.S.P. Investments Ltd of Singapore. The triangular exchanges enabled Theodore and his colleagues to make a handsome profit. As the Acting Commissioner of Stamp Duties wryly observed:

> It would appear that Theodore and Company have sold to themselves their own shares for £100,000 and bought them back from the T.S.P. for £600,000 the cash and shares being supplied by the Emperor Mines Limited. 4

Yet there were potential difficulties in raising additional capital inherent in a financial structure which minimised public shareholding. And this had important implications for production and financial policies - discouraging long term planning, encouraging the payment of large and frequent dividends, and dictating the tight control of labour costs. As one historian has argued in respect of Wernher Beit of South Africa, the 'immobility of share capital...made it all the more vital that capital invested...should be utilised to its very utmost.'5

The group's expansion into two ancillary industries during the late 1930's helped to offset the disadvantages of holding little mobile capital. The incorporation of the Tavua Power Proprietary Company (TPP) and the establishment of a lime quarry at Tau (albeit some 85 miles from the mines) strengthened its monopoly on gold production and created sources of self-generating revenue through loans and mutual investment. Diversification through the provision of power, compressed air and water, and the substitution of expensive imported lime was also beneficial from the point of view of reducing mining and treatment costs.6
Another early consolidation of the Theodore interests occurred in 1938 when the Koroere Gold NL merged with the Emperor operating company.\textsuperscript{7} Koroere was originally capitalised at £A150,000 and had amongst its directors Theodore (managing director), Wren and Hedstrom. Prospecting and mining carried out from 1935 on its properties had produced a low tonnage and a marginal grade of ore. Neither 'warranted' the capital outlay required to install and operate a separate mill and to finance deep ground exploration. For Emperor, the merger proposition was an attractive one, not simply because of the economies of shared production costs, but also because proven lodes within its leases extended into the Koroere area.\textsuperscript{8}

Once the Emperor and Loloma mines became established producers, the possibility of replacing 'joint management' by 'common ownership' was also raised. A single mine amalgamating their leases and operated by one company promised many savings including an end to the costly duplication of capital expenditure on plant and equipment. It would also improve managerial efficiency. The contiguity of leases was itself a reason for a merger. As development expanded the underground workings of the two mines, the ore bearing formations disclosed on Loloma began to encroach upon the Emperor lease. There were early signs of the reverse happening too.\textsuperscript{9} Yet, the two mines continued under separate ownership until Loloma had mined out all its richest disclosed ore by the late 1950's. Economies thus remained confined to joint administration - shared technical expertise, senior management, (some) plant and equipment, and indirect labour costs, notably community services. Dolphin ore was treated by the Emperor mill when it began producing in 1940 and ore from all three mines was treated by one mill from
1944. This went '...a long way towards giving some of the advantages of a merger'—including a reduction in milling costs especially for Loloma, and thus the inclusion of lower grade ore in the latter's reserves.\textsuperscript{10}

It was the colony's taxation of the goldmining industry which was probably the most important single factor advising against further amalgamation of capital before the 1950's. The 1940's saw a steady rise in taxation but rates were relatively low during the 1930's, rising only from 5\% to 7\%. Even when the levy was doubled in 1941 (15\%), Theodore admitted that it was 'comparatively light' and that it put local mining capital 'in a much more favourable position in the matter of taxation than most other parts of the British Empire'.\textsuperscript{11} The royalty system in practice until 1949 in particular encouraged capital diffusion because it was tied to gross income rather than to net profits. This was especially beneficial for Dolphin and Loloma which, though extremely profitable, received annual revenues that were relatively modest.

Dolphin was the most spectacular as a mine of small tonnage but few overheads and high grade ore—'some mine what' Nilsen exclaimed in 1940.\textsuperscript{12} At the peak of its production, its total labour strength numbered less than 100 and from the beginning of operations until its reserves were mined out in 1954, it milled only 120,803 tons of ore; but these produced an average 30.67 dwts/ton ton and yielded 166,162 fine ounces of gold (plus 292.3 ounces in circuit).\textsuperscript{13} Loloma too was a rich though small mine producing in its best years only about one-sixth of Emperor's tonnage and employing just a few hundred men. Between 1938 and 1945, it mined and treated some 200,000 tons of ore that had a yield of about 260,000 gold ounces.
Its very high grade of ore similarly compensated for a smaller throughput and for the heavier costs of mining at depth and treating sulphi-telluride ore. In the first three years of production, Loloma produced ore averaging nearly 29 dwts/ton and until the early 1950's when - in preparation for closure - it began to mine out its reserves, the value of its ore was consistently high.\footnote{14}

By contrast, Emperor's ore was low grade but it was extensive in volume. It was also predominently oxidised and therefore amenable to ordinary cyanidisation; and until the mid 1940's mostly extractable by open-cut mining methods. In the first ten years of production (1935-1945), the mine treated some 1,200,000 tons of ore for 380,000 ounces of gold valued at around £A3,800,000.\footnote{15} (see table 2.8 for production data on all three mines)

From the published accounts of Loloma and Emperor it is possible to get an indication of the profit margins the two companies secured. This being so, it should be noted that declared costs, tonnage, gold output and ore grades did not necessarily correspond to actual volumes. For example, in order to sustain levels of profitable production, the Emperor company sought to regularise gold output - at 4,000 ounces per period - by accumulating a substantial bullion reserve. This policy was adopted in 1938 and entailed issuing 'conservative' accounts of fine gold recovered and ore tonnage treated during the 'clean up' period which occurred before the end of each four weekly period. By January 1939, the bullion reserve amounted to over 6,000 ounces. The policy was difficult to administer and was of course legally risky; and by the end of 1939 a directorate decision was taken to reduce the reserve by treating lower grade ore on both mines.\footnote{16}
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Tons of ore treated</th>
<th>Grade, dwts. gold per ton</th>
<th>Gold Ounces won</th>
<th>Value of Gold Output £(F)</th>
<th>Declared Operating Profits(before taxation, depreciation, &amp; mine development) £(F)</th>
<th>Profit Rates (profits expressed as a % of revenue)</th>
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<p>| TOTALS/ (AVERAGE p.a.) | 308,070 | (27.0) | 389,611 | 3,841,607 | 2,536,379 | (63.8) |</p>
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Table 2.8 (contd)

Note: Data for June 1948-June 1951 have been estimated by taking an average of the figures for January to December of those years.

(a) Emperor treated only low grade oxidised ore during 1943-1944 while awaiting the reconstruction of the milling plant.

(b) This tonnage was for less than half a year's production, a restriction imposed because of the anticipated completion of the combined mill. The gold yield for 1943-1944 was disproportionately high because Loloma had accumulated auriferous material that could be treated.

(c) Nearly 15,000 tons of low grade oxidised ore was included in the ore milled at Loloma during 1944-1945.

(d) Exchange rates for the conversion of Australian into Fiji £ are taken from company annual reports with the exception of the years 1942-43, 1943-44, 1947-48 and 1949-50. Because the preceding and succeeding years' rates were stabilised at 1.124 or 1.125, it would seem fair to presume that exchanges based on this ratio would be quite reliable.

Around the same time, it appeared that an unforecasted rise in the price paid for Fiji gold would push profits above those estimated in Emperor's budget. In order to avoid having to declare this, Nilsen suggested that the surplus be absorbed (on paper) by increasing the charges against maintenance, repairs, stores and mine development. His directors endorsed his proposal urging only that care be taken to inflate depreciation, mine development and the company's income tax reserve, rather than ordinary working costs. The latter's discrepancy with previous years, they argued, was more likely to provoke awkward questions from company shareholders. Nilsen was encouraged to make any further (cost) adjustments necessary to meet the higher costs of production anticipated during the war. He was also authorised to raise by 1,000 ounces the production levels that were to be publicised for Loloma in Australia 'in order to bring in a little more cash'.

As the Australian government prepared in 1942 to limit profit distribution to a maximum of 4% return on capital during the war years, immediate plans were triggered off 'to shape Loloma Company's policy in such a way as to show a net profit not exceeding £20,000 for the 1942-43 financial year.' In order to carry this out, all bullion produced to July 1942 was brought into the previous year's accounts and only sufficient bullion to meet running costs (including taxation) declared at subsequent four weekly periods. Although the company decided in fact to revert to 'normal production policy', the introduction of a Commonwealth tax on dividends paid out of Fiji mining profits and the expectation that sterling would be devalued, led to restrictions on bullion exports for Loloma and Emperor for some years during and after the war. The companies' comfortable profit margins made this possible.
A key feature of the group's financial policy was the priority given to profit distribution over reinvestment in development and exploration necessary to prolong the life of the mines. By September 1941, only a year after it had come into production, Dolphin was in a position to propose the payment of four dividends of 10/- each over the following financial year. Surging profits enabled returns to surpass even these expectations and a total of £50,000 - comprising £30,000 in dividends and £20,000 in (40/-) bonus shares - was dispersed amongst 22 shareholders who had subscribed only £10,000.

The scale of distribution by Loloma was conservative by comparison yet still generous. Like Emperor, the company early announced its intention to pay quarterly dividends. And between May 1938 when it declared its first return and September 1941, it repatriated a handsome total of £A660,000 in dividends. With the total face value of its issued capital repaid by 1939, Loloma's annual rate of return in the first five years of production averaged as much as 64%. (see table 2.9) A fervour dampened to some extent by the disruption to production and Commonwealth tax penalties during the war years, it was significant that by the end of the 1944 financial year the company had distributed a total of £A701,250 representing 17/- per 5/- share. Over the same period, it reinvested less than £A200,000 in development and exploration. From table 2.10 below, it can be calculated that the average ratio of dividends to development as a proportion of profits between 1937 and 1944, was 42:12.

Though the poor relation of the three mines, Emperor shareholders also shared in the boom of the late 1930's and early 1940's. It was, the chairman of the holding company noted in 1938, 'no mean
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dividends £(A)</th>
<th>Rates of return to shareholders (returns as % of issued capital of £206,250)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>82,500</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>123,750</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>247,500</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>165,000</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>41,250</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>41,250</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>20,625</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>37,812.10.0</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>48,125</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>103,125</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Loloma Annual Reports 1938 - 1951.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Operating Profits £(A)</th>
<th>Dividends £(A)</th>
<th>Dividends as % of Profits</th>
<th>Cost of Investments £(A)</th>
<th>Development Expenditure £(A)</th>
<th>Development Expenditure as % of Profits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>122,597</td>
<td>82,500</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>24,427</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>234,480</td>
<td>123,750</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>17,342</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>375,197</td>
<td>247,500</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>35,002</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>348,552</td>
<td>165,000</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>46,839</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>251,006</td>
<td>41,250</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>74,375</td>
<td>40,728</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>104,637</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>74,647</td>
<td>19,083</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>90,329</td>
<td>41,250</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>176,918</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>116,464</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>187,577</td>
<td>14,056</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>155,067</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>211,892</td>
<td>19,069</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>139,803</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>270,250</td>
<td>10,766</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>158,221</td>
<td>20,625</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>664,408</td>
<td>20,419</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>216,262</td>
<td>37,812.10.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>836,096</td>
<td>25,973</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>221,957</td>
<td>48,125</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>962,264</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>318,852</td>
<td>103,125</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>1,152,053</td>
<td>24,829</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

achievement’ to have brought 'a mine the size of the Emperor up to the dividend stage in a little over three years'. As table 2.11 illustrates, the company paid £A570,000 in dividends between 1938 and 1941. This represented an average 15% rate of return per annum (or, if the first three years are included, 8.5%). As a proportion of profits, it far exceeded the capital reinvested in extending the mine's ore reserves. (see table 2.12)

There was another production strategy which appeared to stem from the financial structure of the group: the mining of ore well above its 'pay limit' or minimum payable grade. This practice had the object of maximising returns in the short term and the consequence of undermining the prospects for long term profitable mining. As the colonial administration itself acknowledged, royalty assessed at a 'flat rate' until 1948 promoted 'selective' mining or the extraction of only high grade ore. Defined as the 'temperature chart' of mining policy, the 'pay limit' was of critical importance to the economics of mining. In brief, it meant that the ore grade had to be of a level sufficient to cover the extensive range of cost variables that applied to the production of gold — mining, milling, development etc — and commensurate with its price.

Evidence from the companies' records suggests that they did not comply with this convention. The ore mined at Loloma varied between 25 and 30 dwts/ton which was extravagant beside the minimum payable value of 5 dwts applicable at least into the early 1940's. In 1940, management observed that mining a much lower ore grade of 15 dwts would still guarantee 'a substantial profit' because of the increased capacity of its mill. With one exception, it was not, however, until Loloma's ore reserves were being mined out more than
**TABLE 2.11**

**EMPEROR MINES LTD**

**PROFIT DISTRIBUTION 1935-1951**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dividends £(A)</th>
<th>Returns of Capital £(A)</th>
<th>Issued Capital £(A)</th>
<th>Rate of return (as % of issued capital)</th>
<th>Rate of return (as % of original capital)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>142,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>47,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>142,500</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>807,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>237,500</td>
<td>807,500</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>570,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>574,200*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>191,400</td>
<td>574,200</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>382,800</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>287,100</td>
<td>382,800</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>95,700</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The increase in issued capital here resulted from the purchase of the Costello Mines Ltd mining lease (ML9), the purchase consideration for which included the issue of 14,000 shares fully paid to 6/- each to the vendors.

**Source:** Calculations based on figures given in Emperor Annual Reports 1937-1952.
### TABLE 2.12

**COMPARATIVE TRENDS IN DISTRIBUTED AND REINVESTED PROFITS**

**EMPEROR GOLD MINING CO LTD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Operating Profits (£(F))</th>
<th>Total Returns to Shareholders (dividend payments and returns of capital by Emp. Mines Ltd £(F))</th>
<th>Returns to Shareholders as a % of profits</th>
<th>Development Expenditure (£(F))</th>
<th>Development Expenditure as a % of profits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935 - June 1936</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>17,219</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>47,249</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>21,692</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>113,259</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>22,838</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>244,021</td>
<td>168,889</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>29,873</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>314,024</td>
<td>168,889</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>51,852</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>307,804</td>
<td>126,667</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>51,470</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>237,647</td>
<td>42,222</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>47,140</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>165,308</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>43,825</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>57,056 222,364</td>
<td>126,667</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>2,592</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-45</td>
<td>142,371 326,737</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>17,548</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>184,366 211,111</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>37,156</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>201,945 550,565</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>39,634</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>156,040 170,133</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>56,118</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>192,580</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>43,028</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>333,468 701,165</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>46,224</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>367,697 255,202</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>101,843</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Calculations based on data available in EGM Co Ltd Profit & Loss Accounts & Balance Sheets and Emperor Mines Ltd Annual Reports 1937-1951*
a decade later that the company extracted ore of less than 20 dwts/ton. For a period during 1943, low grade oxidised ore (averaging 3.8 dwts/ton) mined at Emperor showed 'a small margin of profit'. Yet, in general, the company mined ore between 6 and 7 dwts which was well in excess of its 'pay limit' of 2 dwts/ton. \(^{28}\) (see table 2.8)

One immediate consequence of this practice was that as production costs and therefore the pay threshold rose during and after the war, ore which could be previously included in the reserves was rejected because it was no longer economical to mine. In the long term, high grading was a contributory factor to the rigorous drive for higher output during the 1950's and 1960's. It was the mine workforce that was to bear the brunt of this. (see chapter seven)

The declining rate of dividends characteristic of the 1940's (shown in tables 2.9 and 2.11) was not simply a measure of reduced profit margins resulting from the wartime interference with production. It was due above all to new financial policies adopted in response to higher taxation on distributed profits. It was towards the Commonwealth tax initiatives (referred to above) that the group directed its most vigorous attack for, to add insult to injury, the tax was not imposed on the shareholders of Australian mining companies operating in Australia, New Guinea or the Solomon Islands. Although unsuccessful, the group's efforts first to prevent the enactment and then to secure the amendment of legislation included a personal submission from Theodore to Prime Minister Chifley in 1947. \(^{29}\)
Faced with defeat, yet resolved to maintain a high rate of profit distribution, the companies settled for two solutions. Emperor's directorate took the decision to repatriate the bulk of its profits by way of reductions in its capital. Between 1944 and 1945 alone, it returned £A380,000 to its shareholders under this form of tax-free distribution. In so doing, it reduced the face value of its 10/- shares to 6/- and at the same time brought total distribution (from 1935) up to nearly £A1,000,000. \(^{30}\) (see table 2.11) Under Victorian company law, a no liability company was not permitted to repay capital unless operations were winding up. It was probably this restriction, in addition to its modest capitalisation, that called for an alternative means of skirting Australian tax law for Loloma. This took the form of accumulating a substantial reserve of funds which it subsequently invested outside the Fiji mining industry. In this way, as its dividend payments all but lapsed between the financial years 1940-41 and 1947-48, the (cost) value of its investments rose dramatically from £A41,000 to £A664,408 (see table 2.10)\(^{31}\)

Loloma's policy shift was significant on two levels. It enabled the company to resume tax-free distribution of profits within a few years because a proportion of its dividends could be declared out of income from Australian rather than Fiji mining. And the pattern and scale of its investments offered further evidence of an emphasis on short term production. Though some initial investment took place in the colony – principally through the purchase of Fiji Government war bonds and shares in TPP – the bulk of the company's surplus capital was directed towards Australian mining, banking and other ventures including Commonwealth Government loans during the post war period.
The logic of making returns of capital and accumulating an undistributed surplus was not easily accepted by Emperor and Loloma shareholders. In December 1945, both directorates faced harsh criticism for their failure to declare dividends. The direct challenge of one aggrieved subscriber was, moreover, given unwelcome publicity. In an apparent bid by the companies' larger shareholders to force out the smaller interests, the directors had, he alleged,

again thrown a smokescreen over shareholders by claiming it was not convenient, despite the accumulated profits, to declare a dividend...

If this is a sample of capitalistic cricket, it is of the bodyline variety, and should not be indulged in by gentlemen. 32

Writing to Nilsen later, Theodore insisted that the declared opposition to the companies' financial policy had been exaggerated by the Australian press. 33 In any event, it did not hamper their untiring efforts to solve the Australian tax problem. Two further reductions of Emperor's capital aggregating £A478,500 were made in lieu of dividends in 1948 and November 1950, bringing the total return of capital issued in 1935 to £A858,000 or 90%. 34 Loloma continued to garner its reserve and the value of its Australian holdings alone soared from £A94,000 to £A474,000 between 1947 and 1948. In one particular company - The Great Boulder Gold Mines Prop. Ltd - it acquired 30% ownership and Theodore, Wren, Cody and Nilsen became directors. 35 Loloma's Australian investments continued to rise substantially through the early 1950's (see chapter seven) and as table 2.10 shows, the total amount sunk into ventures outside its Fiji mining operations came to over one million pounds by mid 1951.
The first fifteen years of operations by the Theodore group were thus highly profitable. As early as 1941, the combined production of the three mines had surpassed the annual output of the long-established Great Boulder Mines (see table 2.13) and had pushed the industry towards the top of the colony’s export charts. It was little wonder that Nilsen should marvel to Theodore:

I wonder how many people would have thought this possible when you set out from Australia to come over here in 1933. 36

There was no single explanation for this rapid rise to fame and fortune. Two important factors were the monopoly which the group held over the Tavua field including the rich ore bodies of Loloma and Dolphin, and the extensive outcrop of oxidised ore at Emperor which did not entail heavy mining and treatment costs. There was a buoyant price for gold; and production and financial policies together ensured that short term profits were maximised and returns to shareholders were generally high. But a hallmark of profitable mining was undoubtedly the system of cheap indigenous labour established by the mid 1930's. The following chapters seek to demonstrate this.
### TABLE 2.13

**COMPARISON OF GOLD PRODUCTION IN AUSTRALIA AND FIJI, 1941-1943**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mining Companies</th>
<th>Troy Ounces of Gold Produced Annually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake View (Australia)</td>
<td>170,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Associated Mines</td>
<td>108,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Boulder Mines (Australia)</td>
<td>93,216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944*
Emperor Gold Mining Co. Ltd.
Freehold—1011 ac. 2 rds. 38 per.
M.L. 8—200 acres
M.L. 3—100 acres
M.L. 13—100 acres
P.L. 385—100 acres

Loloma (Fiji) Gold Mines N.L.
Freehold—449 ac. 3 rds. 15 per.
M.L. 6—191.5 acres

Fiji Mines Development Ltd.
Freehold—235 ac. 2 rds. 10 per.
M.L. 14—100 acres
M.L. 15—100 acres
P.L. 362—36 acres

P. Costello
M.L. 9—30 acres

Map 3: Tavua Goldfield, Plan of Emperor, Loloma and Fiji Mines Development Leases
Section I

1. J.C. Grieve IOM to Acting Chairman Mining Board, 29.7.35, CSO F111/21.


3. J.C. Grieve IOM to Acting Chairman Mining Board, 29.7.35, CSO F111/21.

4. See Confidential Appendix (hereafter referred to as C.A.)

5. Governor to Prime Minister Australia telegram, 19.2.43, CSO F69/107; further reference in C.A.

Section II

1. Dunkin, H.H. 'Gold Mining at Vatukoula, Fiji' I in Chemical Engineering & Mining Review, July 10 1947, p384; Director of Lands & Chairman of Mining Board (Charlton) to CS, 20.4.40, CSO F111/56.

2. Alan Mackenzie, Director Vatukaisia Mining Co Ltd Report, 23.2.35, MR 30/.../377/ML 2-2; 3rd Annual Report for Kasi Development Ltd, 31.12.37, SSE/M 145; see also C.A.

3. Some very high grade ore - up to 40 dwt/ton - was extracted by open-cut mining but this was far from typical of the grade mined at Mt Kasi (average grade about 4/5 dwt). See C.A.

4. Dunkin op. cit. p384; see C.A.

5. Borthwick's passion for prospecting had led him to abandon his trade as a civil engineer and builder; and for 15 years before he made his strike in Fiji he prospected extensively in Australia. He claimed to have discovered three gold fields, two in Queensland and one in Waihi, in the North Island of New Zealand. His unsuccessful submissions for a reward told the sorry tale of a penniless and destitute old man whose pioneering efforts were, only after considerable public pressure (from Costello in particular), finally recompensed by an ex gratia payment of £100 p.a. in 1939. See Pat Costello to CS, 23.11.32, CSO F111/2; William Borthwick to Governor (Richards), 10.5.37, CSO F111/90; ibid Pat Costello to CS, 10.11.37; ibid Borthwick to Governor, 7.7.38; Pat Costello to Editor Fiji Times & Herald, 9.8.38 and 9.5.39; CS to Borthwick, 10.6.39, CSO F111/90; Dunkin op. cit. p384.

6. See C.A. Costello's acquaintance with Theodore appears to have been established between 1919 and 1925 when, as Queensland Premier, Theodore passed through Suva on return from overseas trips. See Young, Irwin Theodore His Life and Times, Sydney: Alpha Books, 1971, p163.

7. Theodore's reputation was largely restored on his appointment by the Commonwealth Government as Director General of Allied Works 1942-1944. For biographical background and details of the Mungana Affair see Murphy, D.J. 'Edward Granville Theodore: Ideal and Reality' in Murphy, D.J. and Joyce, R.B. Queensland Political Portraits 1859-1952, University of Queensland Press, 1978, pp 293-340. The Queensland newspapers give blow by blow accounts of the Mungana court hearing in which the Crown charged Theodore and three others including a former Premier of Queensland, William McCormack, with 'conspiracy, causing damage to the estate of our Lord the King'. See The Queenslander 30.7.31, 3.3.32, 7.4.32, and The Brisbane Courier 24.2.32. For laudatory accounts of Theodore's contribution to the Queensland labour movement, leadership of the Labour Party and other biographical details, see The Daily Standard (Brisbane) 28.4.15 and 7.8.23; The Worker (Official Journal of the Federated Workers of Queensland) 19.9.12; The Australian Worker 19.1.27.
Additional glimpses of Theodore's personality, labour party policies and political support can be gleaned from a number of private paper collections held at the National Library, Canberra: Lyndhurst F. Giblin Collection MS 366/5/1 - 88 General Correspondence 1896-1935; Henry E. Boote Collection MS 2070/1/42 - 113 Correspondence 1918-1933; King O'Malley Papers MS 460/5249-50/5251/5291. For private correspondence during and relating to Theodore's term as Director General of Allied Works, see Edward J. Ward Collection MS 2396 10/1, 10/2-3, 10/598.

8. Sydney Morning Herald 5.9.45.

9. This was the charge levelled against him by the left wing of the Queensland labour movement well before he entered Federal politics. See Murphy op. cit. p326.

10. Obituary Frank Packer 'Stormy Figure of Australian Journalism', Canberra Times 2.5.74.

11. ibid; and Sydney Morning Herald 4.7.74.

12. See C.A.

13. In the first year of investigations, £80,000 was spent; and by mid-February 1935, a total of £140,000 had been invested by them. See Young op. cit. p164. Cody's business interests were primarily in the liquor trade, and Wren's in racing and mining. The extent of Wren's political influence both in Victorian and Federal politics is discussed in Hardy, Frank Power Without Glory St Albans, Herts: Panther Books Ltd, 1975, and McConville, Chris 'John Wren: Machine Boss, Irish Chieftain or Meddling Millionaire?', in Labour History, No 40, May 1981. See also Sydney Morning Herald 24.12.83, 9.1.84, 26.2.84.


15. Mining Board Annual Report for 1935, CP No 11, 1936; see also C.A. In March 1935, Loloma shares (with a face value of 5/-) were selling on the Melbourne stock exchange for 26/-. See C.A.


17. D.C.J. Hill to G.G. Dunstan, Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL, 17.6.35, MSE/. In May 1935, the DC Nadroga reported to the Mining Board 'I am continually receiving applications from Bombay tailors, Indian storekeepers and lorry drivers...' DC Nadroga (Goepel) to Chairman Mining Board, 7.5.35, CSO F111/15.

18. For accounts of prospecting and mining activities in the 1930's and 1940's in the Vuda area and in particular the brief interest of a few large Canadian and New Zealand companies and two small syndicates in which Indians were represented - the Natalau Gold Prospecting Syndicate and Lautoka Gold Mining Syndicate - see MR 296/...857/ML 10/18-1; CSO F111/62; CSO F111/40; CSO F111/43.

20. Technical Director National Bureau of Mining & Metallurgy to Secretary Melbourne Stock Exchange, 20.5.35, MSE/; ibid D.C.J. Hill to Dunstan, Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL, 7.6.35; ibid A.L. Armstrong (for CS) to Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL, 19.8.35; ibid A.L. Armstrong (for CS) to Cromptons, 28.8.35; ibid Cromptons to H. Percival, Secretary Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL, 29.8.35.

21. See C.A.

22. Mining Journal 5.3.38. The syndicate had in fact established control over the associated Emperor, Loloma, Koroere, and Dolphin mines by 1935. Smaller operations continued in Tavua, Nadi, Tailevu and Waisavura near Suva; and in 1947 Emperor bought the Costello lease for £A4,200 in shares. See Emperor Annual Report 1947.

23. Mining Board Annual Report for 1936, CP No 6, 1937; Mining Board Annual Report for 1937, CP No 27, 1938. Cody described the Tavua area as being unsuited to conventional mining methods and presenting difficulties which 'required a man of Theodore's calibre and organising ability'. Herald (Melbourne) 9.8.35.
Section III

1. See C.A.

2. See C.A.

3. See C.A.

4. Personal communication by descendants, Vatukoula, 9.1.81. See also Assistant DC (John White) to Chairman Mining Board, 1.5.35, CSO F111/7; and for discussion of continuing difficulties to evict the Fijians see DC Central (Ba & Tavua) monthly diary for Sept 1939, CSO F10/6 Pt 9 and Vat/ Emperor Correspondence re Freehold Properties. For details of Rev Lelean, see Macnaught, T.J. 'Chiefly Civil Servants? Ambiguity in District Administration and the Preservation of a Fijian Way of Life 1896-1940' in Journal of Pacific History, vol 9, 1974, p14.

5. This excluded unoccupied Crown lands. Clause 17 Mining Ordinance No 3, 1908 specified that such land would be acquired 'in accordance with the methods provided by law for the acquisition of land for public purposes'.

6. See C.A.

7. See C.A.

8. See Ordinance No 9, 1934, clauses 4, 7 and 77 (1 & 2). In Great Britain, only gold and silver were reserved as Crown property but the practice of claiming all minerals was well established in its dependencies e.g. Nigeria (1916) and Kenya (1932). The Fiji government bought the land on which the Tavua township was built for £1,500 from its Fijian owners. See Address by Governor, 23.11.37, CP No 39, 1937 and C.A.

9. See C.A.

10. See clauses 55 & 56 of the 1934 Mining Ordinance. Clause 23 (2) of the 1908 Ordinance laid down that royalties accrued to the state only where minerals were found on Crown Land. Where they were located on native land, royalty was paid to the owners, distribution being along the same lines as rents for leased lands.

11. See C.A.

12. Under clause 78 of 1934 Mining Regulations, 10% of surface rent was deducted for administrative expenses and 90% allocated to the landowners; if it was 'native land' this (90%) was distributed in accordance with the 1905 Native Lands Ordinance. The draft regulations of 1934 actually proposed payment of only 25% of the surface rent to the landowner. The Executive Council, with the interests of the European landowners dear to its heart, advised that 50% would be more appropriate. But it was the recommendation of the Legal Committee of the Imperial Institute - 90% - that was finally endorsed. See C.A.
13. See clause 127, Ordinance No 9, 1934. In respect of protected trees, permission had to be granted and royalties paid. 'Improved' land, as defined by the government, excluded 'mere pasture land'. (clause 3).

14. See C.A.

15. See C.A.

16. Until 1934, a concession was held over the area by a timber company, Pacific Timbers Ltd. Thereafter, the clearance and use of timber in construction at the mine site was governed by the 1934 ordinance which approved the gratuitous exploitation of timber resources in the area.

17. PC Naitasiri to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, 23.11.35, SNA N50/16.

18. ibid Chairman Mining Board (Charlton) to Adviser on Native Affairs, 24.6.39.

19. Motion by Rusiate Levula, Buli Nadi, SNA N50/22/71.

20. See C.A.

21. See C.A.

22. See C.A.

23. The option and transfer agreements between the joint owners of a block adjacent to Theodore's claims and his syndicate in 1933 and 1934 were cases in point. All rights to prospect and develop were transferred in exchange for a financial consideration of £1,000. The Theodore syndicate exercised its option right and bought the group out for £10,000 cash each plus £15,000 worth of shares in Emperor Gold Mining Co. See C.A. The Loloma mine too brought fortune to one of its early title holders. For the sum of £20, W.G. Lawler bought the prospecting licence over the area from a Suva publican, one David Rimschneider, after assay results on areas adjacent to Borthwick's lease proved discouraging. Lawler's gamble was rewarded well: he sold his title to Theodore for £40,000. Personal communication, Jack Costello, Suva, July 1980.

24. See C.A. Also Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies Despatch, 8.1.36, CO83/212/85016.

25. For example, where the Board had granted a prospecting licence and an application was made for licence over an adjacent area, this had to be referred to the Governor.

26. See Mining Bill 1935, CP No 24, 1936. The bill also increased the responsibilities of the Board by no longer requiring that certain matters such as the granting of mining leases be referred to the Governor. Its proposal to give the Board judicial powers was challenged by the European members and it was ultimately dropped, ostensibly because of the imminent arrival of Sir Arthur Richards, the new Governor. CO83/212/85016.
27. Address by Governor 12.10.34, CP No 41, 1934; See C.A.

28. IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 23.9.35, CSO F111/21.

29. ibid. In Western Australia for example, men apparently prospected on areas of only about six acres (up to a maximum of 24 acres). See C.A.

30. See C.A.

31. CO 83/212/85016.

32. MSE/Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd, Directors Report 3.10.36.

33. Mining Regulations 1934 Regulation 12 (1)(a).

34. Grieve argued that royalty should be assessed according to profitability. IOM to Chairman Mining Board Report, 23.9.35, CSO F111/21. See also ibid IOM to CS, 15.12.36; ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 29.7.35; Mining Board Annual Report for 1934, CP 19, 1935.

35. MSE/Prospectus for Pacific Gold NL.


37. Address by Governor 1.11.35, CP No 23, 1935.


39. See C.A.

40. Mining (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 1935.

41. ibid

42. See C.A.

43. Prospecting licences within a proclaimed area were set at the incredible rate of £15 for every 100 acres or part thereof, while licences applicable to areas outside were reduced from 10/- to 5/- per half year. Mining (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 1935. The Mining Board opposed this increase in fees. Acting Chairman Mining Board to CS, 29.5.35, CSO F111/15.

44. Between January and 31st July 1935, 11 prospecting licence applications were rejected by the Mining Board for the Tavua area on the grounds of inadequate capital. This represented about 25% of the total (43) applications for the area. For the whole of 1935, 46 applications were refused and 23 withdrawn out of a total of 128. Mining Board Annual Report for 1935, CP No 11, 1936. In 1936, 27 out of 73 applications were refused or withdrawn. Mining Board Annual Report for 1936, CP No 6, 1937. And in 1937, 5 applications were refused or withdrawn out of a total of only 24. Mining Board Annual Report for 1937, CP No 27, 1938. See also C.A.

46. Acting Chairman Mining Board to CS, 30.7.35, CSO F111/6; ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board, 3.12.36.

47. Fiji Times and Herald 6.2.37. See also Fiji Times and Herald 26.1.37 and Letter to Editor 10.2.37.

48. Notes on Mining Ordinance and Regulations, CSO F111/60.

49. The 1937 Mining Ordinance reduced prospecting licences from £1 to 5/-: prospecting licences from £20 per 100 acres (or part) p.a. in a proclaimed area and 10/- outside a mining area to 5/- per 100 acres for six months for both proclaimed and unproclaimed areas; and mining leases to 5/- p.a. (issued for a minimum of 5 years). See Leg Co Debates October 1937 for discussion; and F.T.M. White, IOM and Mining Engineer, Report on Subsidies to Selected Prospectors, Appendix T of CSO F131/30 for details of production incentives. See clause 119, 1937 Mining Ordinance regarding rewards.

50. Prospecting licences granted for 1940 more than doubled those for 1939. Leg Co Mining (Amendment) Bill Debate, Director of Lands (Charlton), 29.10.40.

51. Nilsen General Manager EGM, Loloma, FMD to Chairman Mining Board, 15.11.45, CSO F111/4/145. This was particularly the case after the succession of Sir Arthur Richards in 1937. The latter's declared mission to diminish the influence of the companies' representatives in the Legislative and Executive Councils - Scott, Hedstrom and Crompton - meant that the companies could no longer take official patronage for granted.

52. ibid Acting IOM (Hewitt-Dutton) to CS, 14.1.46; Acting IOM to CS, 1.5.46.

53. ibid Acting IOM to CS, 14.1.46; CS to General Manager EGM, Loloma, FMD, 9.5.46.

54. Nilsen to Theodore, 14.6.46, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN. Nilsen's view of the Governor's lieutenant, C.S. Nicolls, was rather more charitable: he described him as 'more wide-awake than the average C.S.'


56. ibid Acting IOM to CS memo, 23.8.46.

57. ibid Governor (Grantham) minute, 1.4.46.

58. ibid Chairman Mining Board to Managing Director Associated Mining Cos, 29.11.46.

59. Nilsen to Theodore, 8.3.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

60. ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 9.6.48.

62. Memorandum on Colonial Mining Policy, Vat/. Royalty was assessed at 1\% of total revenue where (profit) yield was not more than 12\% and 12\% where yield was more than 12\% (plus 1\% of each 1\% by which it exceeded 12\%).

63. Acting CS to General Manager, 8.6.49, Vat/EGM Miscellaneous; Leg Co Mining (Amendment) Bill Debate, Financial Secretary, 20.12.48; General Manager Report for Loloma for year ending 28.6.50; Leg Co Appropriation Bill Debate, Sir Hugh Ragg, 5.12.49.

64. Ragg was the elected member for the Northern Division and owned mining shares and held prospecting licences in the Tavua area in the 1930's. See C.A.; John White Assistant DC Tavua to Chairman Mining Board, 1.5.35, CSO F111/7; and Leg Co Appropriation Bill Debate, Sir Hugh Ragg, 5.12.49. The other European members who criticised the government's taxation of the industry were H. Gatty (European nominated member) T.W.A. Barker (European member for Southern Division); and H.M. Scott (Sir Henry Scott's son and European member for Northwest Division). See Leg Co Debates 11.12.50 & 12.12.50.

65. Chief General Manager Nilsen, Note Covering Recent Visit to Suva 22.3.50 of Cayzer & Nilsen to CS, Taylor & Acting Financial Secretary Nightingale, 28.3.50, Vat/EGM Miscellaneous.

66. R.M. Taylor, Financial Secretary to Chief General Manager Emperor Gold Mines Ltd Melbourne, 5.3.51, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN Chief General Manager & General Manager.

67. See Ordinance No 2, 1952 and Loloma Annual Report 1952. Government revenue from royalties quadrupled between 1949 & 1950 and although total revenue from production increased over the same period mainly due to the devaluation of sterling, it did so at a much lower rate of 26\%.
Section IV

1. Theodore to Hedstrom, 1.3.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

2. ibid J.M. Hedstrom to Theodore, 26.3.33.

3. J.M. Hedstrom to Theodore, 26.3.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; Managing Director EGM to Secretary Emperor Mines Ltd, 30.6.36, Vat/ Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

4. Ormsby-Gore (Secretary of State for Colonies) to Richards, 14.6.37, CO 83/218/85197.


6. Colonial Office Dawe to Boyd minute, 24.4.37, CO 83/218/85197.

7. Juxon Barton (CS) Extract, 1.1.38, CO 83/222/85034. For outline of Marks' other business interests see Pacific Islands Monthly 20.2.31.

8. ibid

9. Crompton's son was married to Hedstrom's daughter.

10. Hedstrom was a member of the Legislative Council for about 30 years and served for nearly the same number of years on the Executive Council. Scott began his 30 year career in the Legislative Council in 1908 and his appointment to the Executive Council spanned some 25 years. He also acted as Attorney-General six times. Marks was one of the first European members to be elected to the Legislative Council in 1904 (also an Executive Council member). Crompton replaced Hedstrom (on leave) in the Executive Council in 1934, was a fully-fledged member between 1941 and 1944, and amongst other legislation, drafted the Mining Amendment Bill of 1935. Details of the careers of the four men are to be found in Pacific Islands Monthly Feb 1931, July 1933, June 1938, November 1944, August 1946, June 1951; Governor's Addresses 1.11.35 and 1.6.56; the Fiji Government Civil Lists; CP No 23, 1935; and the Colonial Office despatches referred to above.

11. Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies telegram, 31.1.39, CO 83/224/85197. Hedstrom resigned from both the Legislative and Executive Councils in 1937 having taken offence to the Governor's attack on the 'archaic trinity' of Scott, Hedstrom and Marks. See for details Richards to Secretary of State for Colonies Despatch, CO 83/222/85034 and Dawe to Boyd minute, 24.4.37, CO 83/218/85197.


13. See MSE/company files.
14. Re. Scott's legal representation see C.A. For other details see MSE/company files.

15. IOM to CS memo, 15.12.36, CSO F111/21.

16. See C.A.

17. Crompton owned 2,200 shares in Mt Kasi Mines Ltd in Nov 1935. See Shareholders Mt Kasi Mines Ltd as at 6.11.35, SSE/M 145. Details re. Crompton and Marks are taken from MSE/company files.

18. IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 23.9.35, CSO F111/21.

19. Henry M. Scott to Colin Fraser, 15.1.34, Fraser Papers Fi F1 1/92/17.

20. ibid Scott to Fraser, 19.2.34. Correspondence between Scott and Fraser reveals that Fletcher took the initiative of meeting Fraser in order to discuss the mining policy being drafted for Fiji. Scott was simply an efficient intermediary.

21. Hedstrom to Acting CS, 23.5.35, CSO F111/97/1-1.

22. Holmes (Chairman of Mining Board) admitted that 'the Board has no staff whatever for the adequate supervision of mining matters and...no member of the Board itself possesses any practical knowledge or experience of mining...' See C.A.

23. Hedstrom to Theodore Confidential, 7.6.35, Vat/ Loloma Syndicate 1934-1935. On this occasion, Hedstrom was aware of the government's concern that a large amount of revenue was being lost to the colony because stamp duty was not being paid on transfer agreements. Theodore rejected his advice to pay duty on the transfer that had taken place on Loloma. See also C.A.

24. J.M. Hedstrom to E.G. Theodore, 5.7.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

25. ibid Managing Director to Hedstrom, 2.1.36; Hedstrom to Theodore, 8.1.36.


27. ibid J.M. Hedstrom to E.G. Theodore, 5.7.35.

28. See for details CSO F67/75 Pt 1.

29. ibid Executive Council Circular April 1937; A.L. Armstrong (Personal Assistant to the CS) minute, 5.5.37. For example, the Legislative Council of Oct 1936 authorised a refund of customs duty to a maximum of £21,000 on mining machinery imported by the Emperor and Loloma companies. They had a year in which to repay this and repayment had to precede dividend distribution. See Leg Co Debates 31.10.36. In 1934, the same concession was granted to Mt Kasi & Theodore to a maximum value of £15,000 each and subject to similar conditions (Mining Board Annual Report for 1935, CP No 19, 1935) and in 1931, to Mt Kasi to the value of £3,000. (Leg Co resolution Oct 1931.)
30. A.L. Armstrong (Personal Assistant to CS) minute, 5.5.37, CSO F67/75 Pt 1.

31. ibid CS to Theodore, 30.8.37. The companies failed to get duty exemptions for timber for underground mining operations.

32. Nilsen, General Manager EGM, Loloma & FMD to Sir Philip Mitchell Governor, 1.1.43, CSO F67/75 Pt II; ibid Comptroller of Customs to CS memo, 13.1.43.

33. Correspondence relating to Tavua Development Committee Report Director Public Works, CO 214/85157.


35. Hedstrom to Theodore, 31.10.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935. Three others were appointed by the Governor - the Commissioner of Lands, Chairman Mining Board, and DC Ba.

36. Report of the Tavua Development Committee, CP No 53, 1935. The Committee advised that the continuing use of the wharfage and railway facilities of the CSR was no longer practicable and that road transport of heavy equipment and plant (over 49 miles of good road between Lautoka and the mine site) would be inconvenient and would incur further construction and maintenance costs.

37. Officer Administering Government of Fiji to Secretary of State for Colonies telegram, 20.8.36, CO 83/214 Surplus Balances.

38. ibid

39. ibid

40. The Executive Council voted unanimously in favour of constructing the wharf at government expense (recommending a vote of £30,000). See Minutes of Executive Council 27.5.36, CO 83/214; Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies telegram, 24.2.38, CO 83/225/85305.

41. Mt Kasi Mines Ltd SSE/ M145 including Shareholdings Lists - see in particular Shareholders as at 5.2.35 and 6.11.35. See also IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 8.4.40, CSO F111/56. For details of the reconstruction, capitalisation and prospecting/mining activities of the Mt Kasi venture until its liquidation in 1948, see Agreement between Mt Kasi Mining Co and Mt Kasi Mines Ltd, 13.11.33, SSE/M 145; CSO F111/56; Chairman Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to Shareholders, 26.3.35, SSE/M145; ibid Secretary Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to Sydney Stock Exchange, 29.4.35; ibid Kasi Developments Ltd 3rd Annual Report 31.12.37; ibid Secretary Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to Sydney Stock Exchange, 26.2.48.
42. Mackenzie pressed for the removal of restrictions on the size of mining titles and the adoption of other regulations designed to prevent a rush (see C.A.). He requested reduction of the customs duties that were granted in 1933 and was appointed to the Tariff Revision Committee set up to consider this request in Nov 1932. (Executive Council Circular April 1937, CSO F67/75 Pt 1). He also protested on behalf of the Mt Kasi Mines Ltd against increased fees which, he claimed, placed individuals and corporations in search of further payable lodes within proclaimed areas under 'quite unwarranted and unfair hardship', proposing a big reduction in the proclaimed Yanawai area. (Alan O. Mackenzie memo to Mining Board, 13.5.35, CSO F111/56.)

43. See Fraser Papers Fi F1 1/92/17 and 1/92/49 for details of Scott's involvement and financial stake.

44. The company began to negotiate purchase of Mt Kasi Mines Ltd early in 1934. See Alan Mackenzie, Director Vatukaisia Mining Co Ltd, 23.2.35, MR 30/.../377/ML 2. Re. Tavua interest see Henry M. Scott to Colin Fraser, 15.1.34, Fraser Papers 1/92/49.

45. Chas G. Gibson to Colin Fraser, Chairman of Directors Gold Mines of Australia Ltd, 23.2.34, Fraser Papers 1/68/21; Fraser to Scott, 28.2.34, Fraser Papers 1/92/49; Chas G. Gibson to Colin Fraser, Chairman of Directors Gold Mines of Australia Ltd, 3.2.34, MR 30/.../377/ML 2-2.

46. Scott to Fraser, 15.3.34, Fraser Papers 1/92/49. Jackson's background suggested he was not a novice in composing fraudulent reports. As Advisory Engineer to the Tullamore GM Co in NSW, he had allegedly participated in the company's attempt to attract capital by publication of an inflated ore evaluation. ibid Fraser to Scott, 18.7.34.

47. ibid Scott to Fraser, 15.3.34. Although he proceeded with selling his shares, Scott evidently decided he had panicked unnecessarily because he held 4,890 shares in the company in Feb 1935. See Shareholders Mt Kasi Mines Ltd as at 5.2.35, SSE/M145.

48. For details of Marr's political career, background as an engineer, and mining interests in New Guinea as well as Fiji, see ADB File 750 C3 Sir Chas Wm. Clanan Marr.

49. Henry Scott to Theodore, 27.6.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

50. ibid C.W.C. Marr to F. Packer (Women's Weekly), 15.7.35; F. Packer to P.F. Cody, 15.7.35; Theodore to Marr cable, 2.7.35; Theodore to Wren, Cody, Packer, 2.7.35.
Section V

1. Wallace H. Smith & Co was represented by Wallace Smith, director of both the Loloma and Emperor companies.

2. For details of the share capital of the three companies, see Emperor Annual Report 1939; Loloma Agreement 24.1.35, MSE/LGMNL; ibid Acting Manager LGMNL to Shareholders, 7.8.35; Managing Director Theodore to Nilsen General Manager, 19.12.41, Vat/Fiji Mines Period Reports 1940–1942.

3. Shares could be bought immediately before dividends were declared and sold at a premium in anticipation of a decline in profits. In 1939, for example, Nilsen bought 2,000 shares in Loloma because the company proposed to pay high dividends from the following year. See Nilsen to Theodore, 6.12.39, Vat/Confidential to 1940; ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 3.1.40.

4. Acting Deputy Commissioner of Stamp Duties, Memorandum of Mining Board, MR/Bunch 2 MB 7/136 Pt 1. After buying Emperor shares for £100,000, TSP went into liquidation, selling out to Emperor Mines Ltd for £600,000 in the form of 600,000 10/- shares and £300,000 cash. About 95% of this sale price went to Theodore, Packer, Wren and Cody. For further details of the various Emperor transactions, see MR/Bunch 2 MB 7/136 Pt 1; Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar–Dec 1935; see C.A.

5. van Helten op. cit. p7.


7. The purchase consideration for Koroere was £25,000 in the form of 50,000 fully paid shares at 10/- in Emperor Mines Ltd.

8. Managing Director's (Theodore) Report, 12.4.37, MSE/Koroere Gold NL Annual Report for period ending 31.1.37; Manager, H.S. Archdale, Circular to Shareholders, MSE/Koroere NL. For details of Koroere's equity capital and early transactions see MSE/Koroere NL.


10. Loloma's operating costs dropped from 90/3.8 per ton to 49/11.8 between 1944 and 1945. Emperor bore most of the burden of treating its sulphide ore, treatment costs between Emperor, Loloma and Dolphin being divided on the basis of 10:2:1. See Loloma Annual Reports 1944 and 1945; Chairman's Addresses at Loloma AGMs, 21.12.43 and 19.12.44; Vat/EGWh Dept Memos 1941–May 1944.
11. Managing Director to Secretary EGM, 20.2.40, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Dec 1939-June 1940. Taxation rose further to 25% (5/- in the £) in 1942 and to 31.25% (6/3 in the £) in 1945. See Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinances No 6, 1941; No 19, 1942; and No 25, 1945.


13. Vat/Fiji Mines Period Reports Finance etc 1940-1942; General Manager Cayzer to Chairman and Directors, 1.10.54, Vat/Dolphin Mines Ltd; Dolphin Mines Ltd Annual Report 1954. In 1952, Dolphin's grade dropped to 20.91 dwt/ton as it worked out its reserves. See Dolphin Mines Ltd Annual Report 1952.

14. Loloma's average grade of ore fell to 21.07 dwts/ton in 1953. The following year it began to mine out its reserves. See Mines Dept Annual Reports 1953 and 1954. For data relating to early production, employment and costs see Loloma Annual Reports 1938-1940; also see Chairman's Address (P.F. Cody) Loloma AGM, 14.12.45.


16. Managing Director to Nilsen confidential memo, 23.3.38, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1939; ibid Managing Director to Nilsen memo, 23.10.39.

17. Managing Director to Nilsen memo, 23.10.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1939; ibid Managing Director to Nilsen 8.11.39; ibid Local Secretary to General Manager EGM 9.11.39; Theodore to Nilsen, 25.10.39, Vat/Confidential to 1940.


19. The Commonwealth legislation taxed dividends declared out of mining profits in Fiji or Fiji-incorporated companies. Minutes of Directors Meeting EGM, 28.9.42, Vat/Emperor Confidential Feb 1942-June 1944; Theodore to Nilsen cable, 19.8.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944; Theodore to Nilsen, 21.7.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN; ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 12.11.45.

20. Theodore to General Manager FMD Ltd memo, 23.9.41, Vat/Fiji Mines Period Reports Finance etc 1940-1942.

21. Managing Director Theodore to Nilsen General Manager 19.12.41, Vat/Fiji Mines Period Reports Finance etc 1940-1942; Balance Sheet 10.6.42, FMD Annual Report August 1942. The net operating profit for the year after all overhead costs, mine development, depreciation and income tax had been deducted, was £68,120/8/-. After the payment of dividends and bonus shares, surplus funds were still available to help finance Theodore's goldmining venture in Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands (Solomon Gold Exploration Ltd) and to acquire an interest in TPP Ltd. See Emperor Annual Report 1941; Secretary EGM to Chief General Manager, 16.6.49, Vat/. Details of profit distribution by Dolphin in later years are not available but it
is likely that high returns persisted at least while it remained a private company, given that net profits in subsequent years generally matched those of 1942.

22. Theodore to Nilsen, 25.10.39, Vat/Confidential to 1940; ibid Managing Director Loloma to Nilsen, 3.7.40.

23. Chairman's Address Loloma AGM 19.12.44.


25. Leg Co Debate on Mining (Amendment) Bill, Financial Secretary, 20.12.48.


27. Nilsen to Theodore, 21.11.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1939; General Manager to Managing Director Loloma, 4.7.40, Vat/Loloma Budget Years 1939/40, 1940/41.

28. Chairman's Address Emperor AGM, 21.12.43; Nilsen to Theodore, 21.11.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence August-Dec 1939.

29. Minutes of Directors Meeting EGM, 28.9.42, Vat/Emperor Confidential Feb 1942-June 1944; Daily Telegraph 31.12.46; Theodore to Nilsen, 21.7.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

30. The only tax payable on a return of capital was by the parent company itself. See Local Secretary EGM Melbourne to Nilsen (Private & Confidential), 18.6.48, Vat/Emperor Budget Estimates, Finance etc Current File; Emperor Annual Reports 1944 & 1946.

31. Table 2.11 gives only aggregate investment p.a. For a breakdown of this see Loloma Annual Reports (balance sheets) 1938-1951.

32. The charge was made by Dr R.N. Hornabrook and quoted in the Daily Telegraph 31.12.46. See also Melbourne Herald 31.12.46.

33. Theodore to Nilsen, 31.12.46, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

34. Tomlins Secretary EGM cable, 4.11.48, Vat/Emperor Budget Estimates, Finance etc Current File; Dept of Mines Annual Report for 1950, CP No 23, 1951; see also C.A.

35. Investments here represent only the cost value of share capital held in Australian companies registered on state stock exchanges. See Loloma Annual Reports 1947 & 1948. Re. Great Boulder see Daily Telegraph 16.3.48; Theodore to Nilsen, 16.12.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

36. Nilsen to Theodore, 14.2.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944.
I Introduction: The choice of Fijian labour

The search for a large and cheap supply of unskilled labour was central to the rationalised production of gold. The fixed international price for gold, and the comparatively large capital investment necessary to bring a mine into production and to keep it viable, made it imperative that labour costs should be kept low. From the beginning, the labour supply for the Tavua like the Mt Kasi goldfields was heavily dominated by Fijians, leaving other racial groups – notably Indians, Rotumans, half-castes and Europeans – to be employed in much smaller numbers. In 1936, it was observed that about 2,000 Fijians had been absorbed into the new industry, nearly 80% of its unskilled labour strength.¹

The use of Fijian labour was attractive to mining capital: it was abundant and the existence of an indigenous economy and social system helped to make it cheap and easy to control. Official wisdom depicted all Fijians as

...landowners who can support themselves from the produce of their lands. There is no economic necessity for them to work for long periods as wage earners. ²

This effectively legitimised the payment of extremely low wages for, as Theodore reassured his co-directors in 1936, the communal system guaranteed a labourer his social and economic well-being; he allegedly entered employment only to acquire tax money or surplus
cash to fund community projects. In essence, then, the access which Fijians still had to land and to a traditional system of social support enabled mine wages to be assessed according to the barest subsistence needs of an individual worker. The cost of his family's subsistence as well as his own security in old age, sickness and periods of unemployment could be transferred to the village.

A definition of Fijian subsistence classifying as luxuries what were seen as necessities for European workers also helped to establish a low wage structure. And once the companies began to recruit married men with their families, it meant that the Fijian wage schedule remained unaltered: the burden of supporting dependants (whatever the number) was considered recompensed by the supply of an additional half food ration. In 1938, Ratu Sukuna, Native member of the Legislative Council, criticised the false distinction that was repeatedly drawn between Fijian and European living standards:

The Fijian's living expenses are apparently lower because he uses less imported foods and clothing. The European standard of living is high because his society demands a high standard of living... The Fijian is born to a standard of living in which he is demanded by his society to contribute towards the needs of his clan so that, in effect, his expenses are considerably higher than people unacquainted with Fijian custom would believe... 4

His protest was unheeded.

Though concentrated in the sugar industry where they were employed chiefly as tenant farmers or mill labourers, 'free' Indians offered a supplementary source of seasonal labour at Tavua. It was economical and convenient despite its high turnover because of its access to agricultural land and proximity to the mines. In the surrounding districts, it was in 'plentiful' supply and considered 'quite intelligent'. 5 Despite these advantages, the associated
mining companies adopted a policy of discouraging the use of Indians in any working capacity, putting a total ban on their employment underground until the late 1940's. Until after the second world war, numbers rarely exceeded 100.6

Contemporary observers have offered various explanations for this. The most important reason was almost certainly the gentlemen's agreement the companies entered with the CSR, committing them to restricted employment of Indians. The agreement extended to general collaboration over employment and wage rates of all local labour, a policy of mutual advantage for it 'minimise[d] the risk of labour playing off one Company against the other.'7

Early perceptions of Indian workers as politically conscious and more truculent than their Fijian counterparts confirmed the prudence of a discriminatory policy. This was particularly so once they became identified as agitators for political and land reform, and as industrial strife intensified in the sugar industry during the late 1930's and 1940's.8 The Tavua companies refrained where possible from signing on Indians even to alleviate the periodic shortages of Fijians that occurred before and during the war. As Nilsen advised Theodore following a Fijian labour strike in 1938:

Personally, I do not care for Indian labor as they are always a source of trouble. Occasionally there may be trouble with the Fijians but it soon blows over. 9

The employment of Rotumans offered a more suitable alternative and the first group was introduced at Vatukoula about the mid-1930's. They were highly regarded for their industry and application to mine work. Their regular attendance — '...only being absent when sick or after obtaining leave for a real reason' — contrasted with the high
rate of absenteeism to which Fijian workers were prone. Although their alleged intellectual limitations confined them to positions of minor responsibility, Rotumans were collectively classified as half-castes and typified as '...better and more reliable worker[s] than the average Fijian and than most of the Euronesians...'. This stereotype articulated an unorthodox version of contemporary ideology which posited a direct relationship between racial origin and levels of intellectual and physical ability. It defied the official classification of Rotumans (like other islanders) as 'natives', with the result that the companies' practice of grouping them with half-castes in respect of jobs and earnings provoked some criticism from the colonial administration.

Though expounded in racial terms, the qualities attributed to Rotuman labour were explicable in non-ideological terms. Land scarcity and population pressure had already set in train a flow of surplus labour to the mainland, and together with the vast distance separating workplace from home, the irregular shipping services and the cost of a return visit, encouraged long term stability. As the Colonial Secretary, Juxon Barton, conceded in 1938

> Generally, I am informed, Polynesian labour is more reliable than Melanesian, & obviously it is easier to deal with natives who cannot go home for the week end.  

Barton's view was shared by others in the government and expressed just as frankly. The Rotuman, one District Commissioner reiterated later, was 'a steady and much valued worker in regular employment, more particularly away from his own island.'

The privileged position of Rotumans in the occupational and wage structure also lay behind their 'naturally law-abiding and docile' disposition. And it was the opposition of Fijian mineworkers to
this discrimination that brought consignments of Rotumans to a temporary close in 1938. Not until the 1950's did they come to represent a significant proportion of the mine workforce; and this took place under very different circumstances for mining capital. (see chapters four, six and seven for development of these points)

With Fijian tax payments seriously in arrears, many provinces in debt and an alarming rise in rural unemployment, it was not surprising that the colonial state should support a policy of preference for Fijian employment. At a time of diminished revenue, it was also spared a good part of the cost of rural infrastructural development including social services for, in addition to their ordinary taxes, Fijians were charged with subsidising the maintenance of water supplies, schools, and transport through the payment of an absentee tax as well as directly through cash remittances and compulsory wage deductions. As Acting Governor in 1936, Barton advised the Colonial Office that:

Although a somewhat indolent agriculturalist, the magnificent physique of the Fijian makes him particularly suitable for work in the mines; and if he is able, and willing, to continue in this form of employment I am sure that a great deal will have been done to enable him to occupy a position in the production of this Colony more comparable with that of indigenous natives elsewhere. 16

The internal migration that occurred following the beginning of mining operations affected all fourteen of the colony's provinces though in varying proportions. Initially, the labour requirements of the Theodore group were met at minimum cost and with little difficulty by the reservoir of village manpower present in the surrounding districts of Colo North. It was the happy consensus of
The Fijian native labour which is available in abundance in the district, is good, steady and reliable, and costs on the average 18s 6d per week, inclusive of rations, with sixpence per day extra for underground men with experience. 17

About 1935, the group was compelled to look further afield for a significant proportion of its Fijian labour. Its expanding activities, and the competing demands of the many syndicates and companies which descended upon the area during the frantic months of the gold rush, diminished its supply of labour, encouraged a high turnover, and had an inflationary effect on wage rates. Drawing first on the neighbouring provinces of Ra, Tailevu and Colo East, the group was soon led into recruiting ventures in more distant parts of the colony, notably Bua, Macuata and Cakaudrove on the island of Vanua Levu, Lomaiviti and Lau to the southeast, and the Yasawa Islands to the northwest. This later development coincided with its first experiments in indenturing Fijians under contract. (see section V)

With this early diversification, the contribution of Colo North fell to 22% by mid-1935. 18 Tailevu and Ra soon became the largest donors; and together with Colo East and Naitasiri (amalgamated after the war), they continued to dominate the Fijian work force in the post-war years and increasingly through the 1950's and 1960's. 19 On the Yanawai field, the closest provinces of Bua, Macuata, Cakaudrove and Lau were similarly established as the predominant sources of labour until the Mt Kasi mining company ceased operations in 1946.

Despite the advantages of Ra's proximity and its massive surplus of floating taxpayers, the Tavua companies had reservations about
employing its men because they were soon branded as 'troublemakers' and 'agitators'. Following an outburst of communal violence between workers from Ra and Tailevu in February 1936, the companies sought to reduce their dependence on both provinces. Their decision to retrench Ra labour 'slowly' and 'quietly' because of its central role in the 1938 strike led to fluctuations in supply from the province during the war years and a drop in its relative strength from 33% to 8.7% between 1935 and early 1945.

Ra's re-emergence as the largest single supplier by October 1945 appears to have resulted less from a change of heart than a change of district boundaries which apportioned to it parts of Colo North. And by the early sixties, Tailevu and Naitasiri had acquired a larger share of the Tavua labour market. Until 1970, Tailevu remained unchallenged as the biggest donor; and in many years during the same period, Naitasiri displaced Ra as the second most important supplier.

As chapter one has shown, the reservoir of Fijian labour had been tapped with some success by European traders and settlers during the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was, however, only with the establishment of the goldmining industry that the village economy and social system were shackled with the responsibility of providing an industrial workforce. Over a period of about twenty years, a hinterland outpost to which short term migrant labour was directed was transformed into one of the colony's largest urban enclaves supporting a population of 5,000. The proletarianisation of Fijian mine labour, though gradual, was systematic. The domination of the village economy by metropolitan capitalism had created the conditions by which labour could be 'freed' for the nascent industry
and the world depression proved to be an important catalyst in this process.

The reliance on international markets and prices exposed Fijian agriculturalists to harsh contractions in demand for their cash crops. And as world prices slumped in the late 1920's and 1930's, they were driven in large numbers on to a depressed labour market. In many districts where a shortage of agricultural land or inaccessible markets prevented Fijians from participating in commercial agriculture at all, there was a dependence on wage employment even before the Depression.

Official ideology celebrated the 'discretionary' and temporary basis on which Fijians entered the labour market, claiming that cash earnings were not crucial to their livelihood. Section II of this chapter demonstrates that the reality was very different: that labour migration to the mines was often a response to impoverished living conditions and that for those living in the interior of the two main islands in particular, work was sought in order to acquire the means of subsistence. Ironically, it is from the diaries and reports of the government's own district officers that the rural conditions of the 1930's have been described along these less romanticised lines.

Economic factors were crucial to the mobilisation of mine labour but they need to be seen in conjunction with a variety of social and political variables which served to boost supply when market conditions were unfavourable to capital, especially during the war years. More important, non-economic factors were central to the changes that occurred in the structure of the mine labour market:
the steady stabilisation of labour, the shift from contract to 'free' labour, and the variations in the provincial distribution of Fijian mine labour. They are crucial to understanding how the recruitment process itself evolved. In chartering the development of a Fijian working class in the goldmining industry, it is therefore necessary to examine the changing dynamics of Fijian social relations and production as well as colonial strategies of economic development and social control. These help to illuminate the respective roles of the Fijian chieftaincy and the state in responding to the labour demands of mining capital.
The systematic incorporation into the mining industry of the provinces contiguous to the two main mining areas was demonstrated in the flow of labour between them. This process was facilitated by conditions of economic dependence and in some cases even destitution. Though the state's 'protective' land policy had retained for the Fijians over 80% of the colony's land area (totalling 4.5 million acres), the land alienated to non-Fijians comprised a high proportion of the more fertile and accessible littoral, leaving to the Fijians, the rugged hinterland and relatively little of the better land.

The Fijian share of arable land amounted to about 5% while virtually all land suited to the production of the colony's most lucrative crop - sugar - had been sold or was under lease. The allocation of reserve land for Fijians under the Native Lands Trust Ordinance of 1940, criticised as 'over-protective', included less than 5,000 acres suitable for cane production; and a large proportion of this required a 'fairly high level of capitalisation and costly technical experiment to become productive'. Despite the opposition of the Council of Chiefs, the alienation of land continued, moreover, through the Crown's appropriation of the holdings of extinct mataqali (Schedule A). Any land declared to have been unoccupied at Cession (Schedule B) was also reclaimed by the Crown.

Commenting on the low productivity of areas inland from the southwestern coast of Viti Levu, Ratu Sukuna stressed that
There are...patches of fertile land but all too small and I have often wondered how peasant farmers living in these arid areas manage to exist. Under the covering of red clay and rocky soil, soapstone appears to exist all over this area - Erosion and poor parched grass are common features. 5

Deviating from the usual tendency to discuss the land question simply in terms of quantitative distribution, a soil and land use survey conducted in the 1950's endorsed this less conventional view of Fijian land holdings. It concluded that out of a total land area of 3,967,761 acres in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, a mere 468,237 acres or 11.8% could be considered 'potentially useful for arable purposes'; and confirmed that unalienated land included 'large areas of waste and forest land.6

Aside from its failure to take account of the quality of unalienated land holdings and the extent of infrastructural development, in particular the accessibility of markets, the enduring image of a 'protective' land policy also ignored the glaring inequalities in individual access to agricultural land. The wide variation in the size of landholding units contributed to these, reinforced by the system of rental distribution under the Native Lands Trust Ordinance. Under this, the state deducted 25% of rent to cover administrative costs and allocated a further 30% to its 'chiefly civil servants'.7 Depending on the number of households comprising a mataqali, per capita incomes might amount to mere 'pocket money'.8

While such anomalies were responsible for the gross discrepancies in the actual (and potential) wealth acquired from the land, they also helped to produce conditions of landlessness and wage labour dependence in some places.
Attempts by a growing number of Fijians after the first world war to participate in the production of sugar cane – sometimes as galala or independent farmers – were often thwarted by the shortage of suitable land. It was a problem that was to become aggravated during the following decades by an accelerating population growth particularly within the Indian community. Conflict over scarce land resources took explicit form as Fijians showed reluctance to extend Indian cane leases – 'if generally practised,...a most mistaken and short-sighted policy,' to Fletcher's mind – and they evicted Indian tenants in some banana districts.

But the obstacles to Fijian cane farming went beyond the difficulties of acquiring suitable land. Land legislation exacted sometimes prohibitive compensation for 'permanent and unexhausted improvements' as a precondition of reclamation. As the District Commissioner Ra observed in 1936, it was 'unfortunate' that in many cases where there is a genuine desire on the part of the native owners to plant cane the value of the improvements precludes them from taking the land back.

In addition, prospective galala had to give evidence of sufficient capital; while Fijians seeking to grow cane on communal land were generally not eligible for the advances which the CSR granted its Indian contractors to buy livestock and implements because they did not hold individual title. Symptomatic of social as well as economic change, the galala movement also met with resistance from some chiefs because independent farmers settled outside the traditional social unit, paying a commutation fee in compensation of the services they had withdrawn from the community.

The scale of Fijian cane farming was determined to some extent by the attitude of the CSR. Much to the satisfaction of the
administration, the company's early experiments with Fijian contract farmers in the Tavua and Ba districts met with resounding success.17 But while publicly supportive of government policy, the company was ambivalent about promoting Fijian cane farming. The influence of a Fijian prophet Apolosi Nawai—self-acclaimed enemy of European capital, the colonial state and the chieftaincy—threatened to destabilise labour/management relations and to undermine a system of labour control that was so essential to its continued accumulation of capital. Rumours in 1932 that Fijian canefarmers on company estates intended to participate in Apolosi's campaign of sedition prompted a sober warning from the CSR's head office in Sydney, suggesting that it was not simply the shortage of land or capital that lay behind the failure of the company's training scheme: 'It would be well', it urged, 'not to invest with too great an importance what you term "our Fijian development schemes".'18

Within a few years, the Colonial Office expressed similar misgivings although for quite different reasons. Warning the Governor of the implications of the galala movement, the Secretary of State wrote:

> Your will no doubt agree that this growth of land consciousness amongst the Fijians will require to be watched and guided if complications with the Indian settlers are to be avoided. Both races have their importance in the economy of the Colony and developments which may tend unduly to foster racial aspirations will require guidance. 19

The home government touched a political nerve that was to run through colonial policy over the following decades. Whatever the evidence to indicate its encouragement of Fijian participation in sugar production, the fact remained that this was scarcely practicable on a large scale. One official summation in 1948 directed a rare attack on government policy and management.
Now the Fijians are endeavouring to enter into the field of production where it is possible to find markets for cash crops. He finds himself, in many areas, economically strangled as his good lands are leased to the C.S.R. Co., who sub-let them to the Indians or are leased out direct to Indian cane farmers. In many cases the sugar fields extend to the edge of the village and the alienation of these lands is a long story and those of us who have been in positions of authority for long periods must accept responsibility for this condition. The Fijian has, in certain areas only a limited area of suitable land available for food crops but the balance which is fairly extensive is of little use at the present time.

The case of Colo North

The tiny province of Colo North had the unenviable reputation of being the 'poorest in Fiji' and the notoriety of being the most recalcitrant. The missionary zeal of the nineteenth century evangelists had been openly spurned by its hill districts; and this remote hinterland was the last outpost of resistance to the political penetration of Bauan might. The economic history of the province told a tale as ugly as its post-contact experience of political suppression and religious conversion. Though its population density was low, its only fertile coastal belt within the district of Tavua and the arable pockets inland were under lease to the CSR, thus confining significant rental income to one district. The other six were condemned to large tracts of mainly unproductive land and those wishing to grow cane did so as tenant farmers for the sugar company.

The isolation from coastal markets and the rugged undeveloped terrain made the marketing of small surpluses a laborious task. It
was, the District Commissioner remarked with rather more curiosity than concern,

very stimulating to meet a man - and often women - carrying on his shoulders a few shillings worth of produce, 20, 30 and even 40 miles over mountain country to the markets of Ba and Tavua, journeys which for 3/-s or 4/-s necessarily involve a 3 days' absence from their homes in the case of places like Navatusila in Colo North. 24

The impoverishment of the province and the severity of the Depression induced an increasing reliance on wage labour. By 1930, this was the main source of provincial revenue. In his annual report of 1932, the District Commissioner drew the government's attention to the appalling local conditions and, in particular, to the existence of an expanding reservoir of unemployed taxpayers who found it difficult to obtain cash for the 'minimum requirements' of '...taxes, clothes, soap and kerosene'. In many cases, he reported, people were not able to provide themselves even with these necessities...and it is quite common to find a village entirely without a light at night, a certain indication of poverty. 25

Such was the gravity of the situation that about 272 men - more than half the total number of taxpayers - were gaoled for failing to pay their rates and taxes that year. 26

The reduction by 8/- per head of the province's annual rate in 1933 extended necessary tax relief. 27 But it was probably also related to the limited and mainly seasonal labour demands of the sugar centres in northern and western Viti Levu. From 1935, as the mining companies sought more Fijian labour, the able-bodied men in the three hill districts of Savatu, Nasau and Nadrau were required to pay another 10/- a year in the form of an education rate. What
amounted to an increase in the gross levy of about 100% was imposed despite official observations that year that

Rates and taxes are collected with difficulty in the hill districts, and it was found that with a high rate there were a great many more defaulters, who went usually to prison. 28

Over the next two years, the hill districts had their rates raised further with the introduction of a survey fee, initially fixed at 5/- and then increased to 10/- p.a. The general pattern until 1939 was, with few exceptions, one of small but steady increases. 29 Stiffer penalties governing the imprisonment of tax defaulters consolidated a trend that coincided with the expanding labour requirements of the Tavua goldfield. 30 The establishment of the new industry was unquestionably regarded as something of a panacea for the province. The reports of its District Commissioner, C.S. de Reay, reiterated glad tidings of the rising demand for local labour and marked the gratifying boost this had given the province's depleted coffers. It was, indeed, Colo North's 'more prosperous conditions', Reay argued, that justified a 'substantial' increase in the annual rate for 1938. 31 With a disarming frankness, he acknowledged that the province furnished 'a useful reserve for the [mine] labour market' and that it was the compulsion on Fijians to earn taxes that created such congenial conditions for capital:

But for the necessity to go out to earn these taxes many Fijians would not bother to leave home, their dependents would be deprived of what have now become necessities (clothing, soap, kerosene etc), and industry would go short of labour. 32
The origins of labour migration from Ra, Tailevu, Naitasiri and Colo East to the Tavua goldmines also lay to some extent in the limitations of their market economies and in the scarcity of land suited to the production of cane and within 'economical' reach of the CSR tramline. Together, these conditions created pools of labour well in excess of the CSR's demands for mill labour, the temporary jobs available on the Ellington, Lautoka and (for Tailevu) Suva wharves, and government labour requirements for road construction and maintenance.\textsuperscript{33}

Although only 13\% of Ra's arable land was alienated to the CSR and Indian sugar farmers, it was a mere 8\% (27,700 acres) of its total land area of 342,250 acres that was declared in the 1950's to be of this quality: 15.7\% (53,750 acres) was considered 'potentially useful for orchard crops and grazing but not for arable'; 1.8\% (6,450 acres) was suitable for afforestation; and as much as 74.3\% (254,350 acres) was 'potentially useless' for any of these activities.\textsuperscript{34}

Only in three out of Ra's eighteen districts – Nacoko, Rakiraki and Raviravi – was cane cultivated by Fijians and in 1934 this area amounted to a mere 102 acres, 1.7\% of the total area under cane in the province. By 1936, this had increased to 130 acres, the average individual holding being seven acres; but with the number of Fijians taking up farming at a faster rate than the area coming under cultivation, this had dropped by the following year to 5.6 acres. This was about half the standard size of CSR leases to Indian farmers.\textsuperscript{35} The districts of Rakiraki and Raviravi had the
apparent advantage of rent incomes, but wage employment was still necessary to supplement earnings.\textsuperscript{36} The state's prerogative to appropriate land reputed to be vacant at Cession and to confiscate land belonging to an extinct mataqali sanctioned claims to a total of 35,283 acres of Ra land in 1927 alone.\textsuperscript{37}

Indigenous commercial agriculture in Ra was thus confined mainly to banana production in the Wainibuka River districts, to small scale experiments with tobacco and maize farming in the hill districts, and to some rice cultivation. Fijians from the province were regarded as 'keen agriculturalists', but they faced the difficulties of selecting cash crops suitable to available land and finding markets.\textsuperscript{38} The state's reluctance to commit revenue to the building and maintenance of roads in the interior also meant that districts and villages had sometimes to develop their own infrastructure in order to market produce.\textsuperscript{39}

The establishment of a mining settlement opened up a new market for Ra like parts of North Tailevu and Colo East. Transport problems, however, led to considerable wastage and the prices offered by the mining companies for Fijian root crops like dalo often compared unfavourably with those of other local markets.\textsuperscript{40} The need for employment drew large numbers out of their districts, and even away from the province. In 1934, about 60% of Ra's taxpaying population was declared absent. The figures continued to be high throughout the decade; and with the outbreak of war, they became still higher. By the late 1930's, the main source of provincial revenue derived from the wages of unskilled labour in the sugar and mining industries.\textsuperscript{41}
In Tailevu too, the economic conditions of the 1930's sapped the ability to produce a surplus adequate to meet tax and other cash needs and encouraged high rates of absenteeism from the province. Holdings of unalienated arable were larger than in Ra but still aggregated only 49,950 acres or 20.8% of the province's total land area. The proclamation of the Tavua goldfield afforded an accessible avenue of employment for districts like Bau, where land scarcity was critical, and for areas assigned to the cultivation of bananas for export.

In Naitasiri and Colo East, a trivial proportion of land (8.6%) was suitable for arable cultivation and 71.6% classified as 'useless'. These two areas were, along with Tailevu and the Wainibuka district of Ra, dependent on banana production. Because of this, they suffered declining incomes and deteriorating living standards during the Depression. Low prices were only one of their problems. Marketing through licensed European and Chinese buyers - ironically dubbed a protective device by the administration - offered growers a negligible proportion of the value of their produce. In 1938, for example, they received less than 4/- a case, some 36% of the total f.o.b. price of 10/3 paid by the New Zealand government.

Competition with other Pacific Islands for the New Zealand market, exclusion from the Australian market, and irregular shipping services to Canada aggravated conditions of insecurity. And while the paucity of domestic infrastructure meant that produce had often to be transported long distances by raft to packing stations, natural disasters - mainly hurricanes and floods - ravaged plantations with an obstinate frequency, severely diminishing and sometimes obliterating entire annual earnings. Livestock losses and
damage to houses were compounded by food shortages that sometimes necessitated the issue of emergency food supplies. 46

The effects of the war on manpower, shipping and markets were partly alleviated following demobilisation but uneconomic albeit improved prices continued to be a major disincentive to banana production. 47 As the Secretary for Fijian Affairs suggested in 1946, banana, like copra, producers' would be more active in the work of planting, weeding and cleaning if the results of their labour showed a proportionate return in cash.' 48

The mounting tax burdens placed on Fijians from the banana districts reduced the real value of their produce and increased the opportunity cost of continued participation in the industry. Aside from some temporary adjustments during the war, tax levels generally rose from the late 1930's. In Naitasiri, the annual levy more than doubled between 1937 and 1949 (from £1/12/- to £3/10/-) and in Colo East which amalgamated with it in 1945, the rise was scarcely less spectacular (from £1/18/- to £3/10/-). Though the levies in Ra tended to stabilise during the 1940's, and in Tailevu fluctuated only slightly, both provinces experienced proportional increases of significance over the same period (from £1/11/- to £2/10/- for Ra and £1/15/- to £2/11/- for Tailevu). 49

The Copra Provinces

Conditions of economic decline and rural impoverishment were also apparent though not uniformly in the provinces of Lau, Bua, Macuata, the Yasawa Islands, and the Savusavu district of Cakaudrove where
the principal form of Fijian commercial agriculture and thus source of tax revenue was the production of copra. All of these areas were drawn into the mine labour market during the 1930's and the early 1940's. In Bua, a small province of less than a thousand taxpayers, large areas of high quality land had been alienated as freehold to European settlers and the bulk of the remaining fertile valley areas leased out to Indian rice, tobacco and maize farmers. Land retained by Fijians was essentially confined to 'barren hills and unfertile country'. Of the neighbouring province of Cakaudrove, an official source depicted a similar situation:

Most of the good land of Cakaudrove was alienated before Cession, the then Tui Cakau trading it for arms and ammunition in his wars against Cakobau. Practically the whole of Taveuni is under European ownership up to the 2,000 foot level, above which is impenetrable bush. From Savusavu Point to Kubulau stretch freehold lands with hardly a break, now held in most cases by the part European descendants of the original settlers. Savusavu Bay consists largely of freeholds wherever the quality of the land justified settlement before Cession. Only odd patches of nuts on the coast, the formerly untravelled Natewa Bay, and the bush-covered mountains belong to the natives.

In Lau, the pattern of (unaliernated) land distribution constricted the ability of some districts to participate in copra production and this had put pressure on men to indenture as estate labour in Taveuni, Vanua Levu and Lau even before the Depression. In 1934, the District Commissioner reported:

except for the Chiefs and Tongans, few people possess holdings capable of producing more than about 4 cwts. of copra a year. Some find themselves without coconut land owing to the increase of population, the fixed number of holdings, and the unsettled customs of devolution.

Copra dependence in Lau as in the Yasawa Islands was exacerbated by infrequent shipping and the high freight charges that applied to
provinces spread over scattered islands, many of them far from the commercial centres of Suva and Levuka. In such remote outposts, producers were, moreover, commonly at the mercy of one trading firm or buyer and so obliged to accept a monopsony price. Similarly, in the copra districts of Cakaudrove, isolation from markets demanded that produce be carried many miles to the nearest store, where prices tended to be much lower than those prevailing elsewhere in the colony.

Both in Lau and Bua, the sale of bêche-de-mer and trochus shell supplemented incomes but neither reduced the dependence on copra as the main export crop. For Bua, the sugar industry in Ra also offered a small market for food crops but the ability of local farmers to take advantage of this was curtailed by their reliance on decrepit boats and competition with Chinese traders. A like situation existed in Macuata where the sugar centre of Labasa provided an outlet for surplus food crops: the distance of the supplying villages from town, the absence of roads, high freight costs, and competition with Indian traders made production for this domestic market an unpopular venture. 53

Hurricanes and to a lesser extent droughts contributed to a general decline in these provincial economies during the 1930's, posing an additional threat to the viability of commercial agriculture. The devastation of coconut trees along with food crops and houses reduced hundreds of families to a state of destitution and had the immediate effect of forcing men on to the labour market in much larger numbers. Given the seven year cycle of coconuts, the production of an agricultural surplus became an impossible source of tax earnings, sometimes for several years. This dictated a
reliance on wage labour for longer periods. The destruction of food supplies also meant that subsistence needs could only be met by migration to centres of employment. In such circumstances, tax obligations prolonged the periods of absence, increased the burden on those remaining behind (particularly the women), and delayed the restoration of houses and other basic amenities.54

As the depression of copra prices on the world market coupled with natural disasters slashed cash incomes, they created the chief labour pools for the Yanawai and alternative reserves for the Tavua gold field. The economic stress in Bua exemplified conditions which were highly favourable to mining capital. The combined misfortunes of two hurricanes in 1929 and 1930 left severe damage in their wake and together with a drought in 1930 caused acute food shortages. The province imposed the highest provincial rate in the colony at this time and its gross per capita levies continued to rank amongst the heaviest in subsequent years: during the 1930's and 1940's they were consistently fixed at between £2 and £3.55

As for the other copra districts, the opportunities for employment in road building, cane harvesting, or on the copra plantations of Vanua Levu and Lau were insufficient to meet the rising demand for work. The casual labour requirements of European copra planters were never very great even before the Depression and by the early 1930's, road contracts could not absorb the province's expanding reservoir of surplus manpower. The stark reality of living conditions was captured in an official report for the province at the end of 1932:
The standard of living in Bua is very low. Few villages have bread, and tea, milk and meat are rare luxuries. The furniture of a house is extremely simple usually consisting of a box of clothes, a lamp, a few iron pots, plates and cups, two or three spoons and a fork... Most of the hill villages have been without kerosene for months, their light at nights being only the fire. 56

In the same year, a report of Ratu Sukuna described in just as precise and poignant detail, the effects of 'hurricanes, droughts and depression in the copra market' on the relatively comfortable living standards which Fijians in Lau had come to enjoy. By the early 1930's, a 'daily diet' that had included 'bread, rice, sugar, tea, coffee, tinned milk, and tinned meat' and income levels which had made possible the purchase of 'the most expensive linens and silks', had been mercilessly whittled away:

Now most of the people are back on native foods. There are families with just one change of clothes between them. Others cannot buy even soap. Houses are unlit at night. Villages (even Lomaloma) find it necessary for want of kerosene to dispense with Evening Services. No longer are happy, holiday-making Lauans to be met with in the streets of Levuka and Suva. These days they are seen there only as labourers. 57

As for Fijians from the other copra and the banana districts, the sustained and combined blows of land shortages, falling prices, and mounting costs of basic items of food and clothing, set the scene for the indenture of Lauans as mine labour from the early 1930's.
III Taxation as a Determinant of Wage Labour

While economic adversity or natural catastrophes were directly responsible for the move of Fijians from all areas of the colony to the mining areas, these conditions did not of themselves generate a mining proletariat. The economic and cultural autonomy of the Fijians, although diminished, was by no means destroyed. Even during the depression years or in the wake of a hurricane, flooding or other disaster, when the pressures on Fijians to enter the labour market were most acute, the supply of mine labour was erratic and short term. For those areas where export crops could be grown as an alternative to wage labour, price improvements at least offered the choice of a return to the land; and this occurred briefly in the mid-1930's for mineworkers recruited from banana districts, and in 1942 and in the post-war years for labour originating in the copra regions. The proportional and absolute decline in the contributions of Lau, Bua and Macuata to the Tavua workforce after the war can be largely explained in terms of recovery in the copra market.

Although there were, as shown in the previous sections, areas in the colony where Fijians had little or no capacity to produce for the export market, the alternatives of growing food crops for local markets or simply for subsistence were possible because they had not been totally dispossessed. For this reason, the intervention of the colonial state - taking various forms - was crucial in drawing Fijian labour into the mining industry and in keeping it there. One important instrument of labour extraction was the direct taxation system which since 1913 had demanded from able-bodied Fijian males between the ages of 16 and 60, annual cash contributions to revenue.
This took the form of a provincial rate (of between 11/- and 23/- in 1935) and a government tax of £1.²

The rate was something of a misnomer for it took no account of individual resources. Men with five or more dependants paid a concession rate but in all other respects it constituted a 'head tax'.³ A number of other levies were also extracted including an education rate; land survey fees; reimbursement of the cost of government food relief distributed during hurricane and other disasters; and, for those employed or otherwise absent from their homes for more than a year, an absentee tax or commutation rate (generally set at £1) which was paid in lieu of compulsory communal services. The colonial tax system integrated Fijians formally and firmly into the money economy.

Long before the inception of goldmining, this political mechanism had served as a determinant of wage labour in areas where the agricultural means of production did not exist to supply a tax income. In two crucial ways, however, the full weight of the system was brought down upon Fijian taxpayers as the demands for mine labour expanded during the 1930's. The structure of taxation dealt a particularly savage blow to those districts which already exhibited a reliance on wage labour for cash incomes, in this way compounding rather than mitigating the disability of restricted or inadequate landholdings. But tax demands were also tested against the autonomy of (export) agricultural districts, bringing new areas into the orbit of wage labour relations because falling commodity prices demanded uneconomic and sometimes impossible levels of output.
In Savusavu for example, it was estimated that two tons of copra were needed from each taxpayer in order to raise the basic (government and provincial) taxes in 1933. To do this, a taxpayer needed eight acres of coconut land. 'Many a native', it was admitted, 'has not so much as 8 acres...in other words he is being taxed more than his property is worth.' In Lau, on the other hand, a compulsory system of communal copra cutting was used to extract taxes.

The failure to take account of the disparities in provincial (and district) wealth in determining per capita levies had its critics within the Legislative Council. There was support for tax relief to Fijians in the copra districts even amongst European members like Scott, Hedstrom and T.W.A. Barker. And in defence of a motion to reduce the native tax assessment for the following year and to restructure the system by amalgamating the government tax and the provincial rate, the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (H.C. Monckton) argued in 1935 that:

the native Fijian pays a good deal more in direct tax than other members of the population, particularly the Indians...

He is really heavily taxed in proportion to his ability to pay when he pays up to £33s. [sic i.e. £1/13/-] 7

The social effects of a system which obliged an increasing number of men to leave their villages for distant centres of employment for at least two or three months of every year, caused anxiety within the conservative wing of the administration. Long spells of separation from the village 'interfered' with home life, taught bad habits and induced a general restlessness. The 'overtaxation of the Fijian', it was charged, was 'breaking up the native life'; the withdrawal of
able-bodied men left the 'old men and the women and children [to] pick up a poor living for themselves while the village work is entirely neglected.'

The case for reforming the Fijian tax system also rested on the practical and financial advantages of collecting one as opposed to two taxes and of shifting more of the responsibility for providing social services on to the Fijians themselves. Though the central administration claimed a smaller proportion of the total levy, and the basic tax was reduced generously in 1936, these benefits were all but negated by the increased obligation on taxpayers to subsidise the development of rural infrastructure. More important, the structural inequalities of the system remained, legitimised on the curious grounds that income levels varied within as well as between provinces. The introduction of survey fees reinforced these inequalities because uniform rates were applied to cover the cost of boundary delineations for a whole province, irrespective of the varying amounts of work done in each district and the differing sizes of landholding units. The practical considerations governing tax collection were in the end of central concern, for as the Provincial Commissioner Lau admitted in 1937 in respect of his province, where an additional £4,000 had to be raised:

> The method of collection is not equitable, as small landowners and large landowners will pay the same, but it is the simplest form from an accounting point of view, and the only one which will ensure full payment. 11

Failure to pay taxes was a criminal offence bringing a fine or an imprisonment term, and Fijians were tried for default before 'native' courts. The reports of district officers repeatedly noted the wide gulf between provincial estimates and receipts and
the high rate of prosecutions that resulted. In 1936, 25% of Tailevu's taxpayers were prosecuted. Nearly all 'native prisoners' in the province were tax offenders the following year. In Ra there were as many as 54% defaulters in 1940; while eight years later, it transpired that 38% (over 3,000) of the total number of cases heard in the colony before the district and provincial courts (over 8,000) were against tax offenders.

It was recognised that provincial tax debts both during the depression years and in the late 1940's generally resulted from the financial difficulties of taxpayers. The Provincial Commissioner Tailevu recorded in 1936 that

Some of the people of the Province find it difficult to earn money. It seems that those who have the means do not neglect to pay their native Provincial Rates and that the balance outstanding is a fair indication of the inability of some of the natives of the Colony to earn money...

Over a decade later, when recovery in the copra market had brought relief to some districts, the District Commissioner Southern (J. Judd) surmised that it was the fact that 'the majority of Fijians enjoy little more than a subsistence economy similar to that which existed before the war' that made it difficult both to reduce provincial deficits and to raise rates in the southern and eastern districts.

Paradoxically, tax defaulting was often met by attempts to increase the following year's levy. In Ra, for example, the provincial rate was raised by 5% in 1941 in order to compensate for the default of about one-third of its taxpayers. It was considered 'advisable' to do this in order 'to make a working surplus'. Despite the acknowledged problems Fijians had in meeting payments, there was an upward trend in direct taxation from the late 1930's. Higher import
duties increased indirect tax obligations following the outbreak of war; and from the mid-1940's, there was the additional pressure of contributing to the cost of education, notably teachers' salaries. This effected a steep rise—on average over 30%—in provincial rates throughout the colony between 1944 and 1950. (see table 3.1) It was, the Secretary for Fijian Affairs admitted, 'extremely doubtful whether any further increase can reasonably be borne by the people of the poorer provinces.'

Tax increases had an important consequence for mineworkers because throughout the 1930's and 1940's the Tavua companies maintained an extremely tight control on Fijian wages, making dilatory and but token responses to surges in the cost of living. (see chapter four) Prolonged periods of employment were thus required if taxes were to be paid and living standards maintained. In this way, the pattern of Fijian taxation became an important element in the process of labour stabilisation at Vatukoula. There is no evidence to show that the system was intended to furnish the goldmining industry with large numbers of permanent labour, but it was a widely recognised determinant of the escalating (Fijian) movement on to the labour market. Like other political devices, the trends in taxation have to be seen in the context of the pre-eminence accorded the industry in colonial economic planning, and specifically in relation to the state's concern to minimise war-time disruption to its supply of labour.
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Source: Secretary for Fijian Affairs Annual Reports for 1949, (CP No 2, 1951) and 1950 (CP No 5, 1952).
IV Social and Cultural Influences on the Mobilisation of Mine Labour

The movement of Fijians on to the mine labour market has to be understood in the context of social as well as economic and political pressures. A feature of the early history of goldmining was the extent to which the traditional social system and in particular the chiefs who presided over it, were successfully integrated into the whole process of labour mobilisation. It would be quite wrong to see the chiefs simply in their capacity as 'recruiters' and to ignore their expressed objections to the enormous rural dislocation caused by the exodus of adult males to the mines and other centres of employment. Yet the perceived benefits - both personal and communal - of supplying batches of men under contract, led to an extraordinary degree of collusion in the mine labour market. It established this traditional ruling class as a crucial intermediary between the large mining companies and their Fijian workers.

In spite of the declared intentions of the 19th century architects of 'native' policy, the principles governing traditional social relationships were radically altered. The Fijian chieftaincy, traditionally vested with control over the distribution and utilisation of resources (including labour), acquired new powers which were safeguarded by the colonial state. Exactions of tribute and service to the community became compulsory and backed by the force of law; unauthorised absconding became a criminal offence; and the checks and balances of a stratified social structure were removed.
The programme of village and district work put forward annually by the provincial councils and approved by the Governor set aside certain months of the year for housebuilding and repairing, the weeding of roads, the planting of food, and other tasks designed to keep villages productive and sanitary. For three months of each year - ironically called the 'free' months - men were at liberty to earn money for their taxes and domestic needs. All Fijians between the ages of 14 and 60 - unless exempt by payment of a commutation fee or deemed physically unfit - were obliged to perform certain public works. Every able-bodied male was also required by law to pay annual 1ala (tribute) in the form of several days labour (or cash in lieu) to both his district chief and village headman.2

By applying penal sanctions to enforce personal 1ala to chiefs, labour services to the community and public works, the early colonial state had removed the voluntary and reciprocal aspects of the relationship between chief and commoner as well as extending the demands made upon the labour time of commoners.3 It was a formula that defied views prevailing in international labour forums and that specifically violated the Forced Labour Convention, ratified and brought into effect in Britain between 1931 and 1932. The colony's compliance with the convention - under the Forced Labour Prohibition Ordinance of 1933 and subsequently under the 1947 Labour Ordinance - was compromised by exclusion of compulsory communal services from the definition given to 'forced labour'.4

The appointment and payment of official chiefs made them answerable to the colonial administration rather than to their own people. And it was largely on the basis of their official designation as tax collectors and overseers of the communal system that there was
political pressure on them to become directly involved in the recruitment of labour for the capitalist economy. Employment at the mines was often undertaken to meet the cash demands of traditional ceremonies and transactions; but the social, educational and (physical and spiritual) health services of the community — specifically water tanks, district schools, churches, boats for the transportation of produce, and roads — were also part of what was referred to as the 'social levy'. It was the responsibility of official chiefs to ensure that infrastructural costs like these were covered and that their districts remained solvent. During the depression years when this was rarely possible, ways of reducing local debts had to be found, and chiefs were drawn into the mine labour market as recruiters.

Charged with these various functions, chiefs came to acquire a degree of control over both the distribution of labour outside the subsistence economy and the terms on which Fijians sold their labour power. They determined when and how large a party of men should be sent to the mines; they negotiated the terms of engagement with the employer or recruiter on behalf of the contracting labour; and they decided what proportion of monthly pay packets was to be allocated to the labourer himself. Wage deductions authorised by chiefs — varying between 50% and 100% of gross earnings — were accumulated to fund communal projects of the kind noted above and personal remuneration seems to have been regarded as something of a special privilege. A letter from Ratu Sukuna to Theodore in July 1936 illustrates this well:

Under the influence of the wealth of the Gold Mining area, the Lauans with you find that money is a necessity and their Chief considers that they might now be allowed to draw 5/- a month per male. May this be arranged please? 

6
While mine work under such terms would appear to have offered few attractions for the labourers themselves, the same could not be said for the chiefs. Indeed, the promise of customary lolomas or gratuities, permitted in practice if not by law, sometimes encouraged them to send men to the mines rather than into the fields to cut copra even when this would be a slower method of clearing community debts. An economic motive also lay behind the protests of some chiefs against the unauthorised recruitment of labour. As the Provincial Commissioner of Tailevu suggested in respect of stevedore labour during the 1930's:

> It appears as if the Bulis and Chiefs are sometimes anxious to get more than a reasonable share of the money earned by the people ... Some Bulis when approached send mere boys and weaklings who are unsuitable for the work. 8

News travelled of the lolomas paid by the mining companies to local chiefs; and one buli, at least, took offence to being overlooked:

> ...rumours have reached me of the present or bonuses received by those Bulis of the Districts, whose men have come to work in the Mining Centres. If this is true then I earnestly implore you to allow me to receive that gift, just as you have done to the others. I should be very pleased to receive it.

A good number of my men have now left my District to work in your Mining Districts of Matanagata.

I beg you Sir to kindly excuse me for taking upon myself the liberty to write to you concerning the matter; for I feel that I ought to be the recipient of such a gift!

Hoping you will oblige me by fulfilling my petition. 9

Though ostensibly designed to cement the institutions and values of traditional society, 'native' policy in fact acted as a catalyst of social change by creating internal tensions. To some extent, the flow of 'voluntary' labour to the mines as to other centres of
employment reflected these. 'Voluntary' recruits consisted of casual workers who, without the consent of their chiefs or recourse to contracts, made their own way to places of employment. 'Much of the denudation of the village population', it was suggested in 1937, was due to this traffic. 10

Even before goldmining began, many went in order to escape a system that had become irksome, the prospect of wage employment encouraging the young and able-bodied to abandon the disciplined life of the village with its compulsory and unpaid duties. 11 Once established, the Tavua goldfield offered merely another option, although in the hinterland districts at least, the numbers of 'voluntary' labour appeared to increase as the mine labour market expanded. The men of Koroboya village, for example, soon acquired a reputation for moving down to the mines during the 'work' months and returning home during the 'free' in order to avoid communal work. Only the old men, women and children remained. There was, the District Commissioner Colo North (Reay) reflected in 1936

...a growing desire in the hill Fijian, particularly in the young men, to get away from the village, where the decreasing able-bodied population makes increasingly heavy demands on him, and to taste the joys and excitements of the coast. There he has warmth, a varied diet, amusement, a free life and congenial company. For these he has to work no harder than he has to work in his village. That a larger proportion of men has not left before this must be due to the limited amount of work available. Work is now becoming plentiful. To the normal demands of the sugar industry have been added those from the goldfields, and if any considerable development of these fields takes place what is already a mild problem will become acute. 12

Reay criticised the work programme for its 'rigidity' following natural disasters, its legal sanctions, and the general restrictions it imposed on personal freedom and enterprise. The frequency of prosecutions, he argued, proved that 'the native works reluctantly
under the present system of control'. Indeed, along with tax defaulting, the failure to perform communal services ranked as one of the more common offences tried in district and provincial courts, sounding an important social protest which contributed to the drain on rural manpower.

Articulated as a concern for the hardship it brought to the community, the chiefs' opposition to unauthorised out-migration was also dictated by self-interest. The loss of manpower meant not only that food production, housebuilding and other social services were detrimentally affected but that they suffered a personal loss in diminished lala. In this regard, their objections were similarly directed towards the steady erosion of their authority and influence in local administration that had begun in the 1910's. Theirs were the frustrations of a ruling class whose power base had been steadily undermined.

The 1945 Fijian Affairs Ordinance and its supporting (1948) regulations marked the state's sensitivity to the 'irritation' and 'protests' of the chiefs over the increased authority enjoyed by European officers. The overhaul of the colony's native administration had become imperative for it was considered urgently necessary to broaden the base of Native support and collaboration upon which every Colonial Government must stand and to give reality to Native responsibility for Native Affairs.

The legislation represented a fresh commitment to regulating the social and economic activities of Fijians in accordance with the 19th century principles of indirect rule. The restrictions imposed on movement outside their villages were justified on the grounds...
that 'overcrowding' was not conducive to good moral and physical health and this was 'far more important in the public welfare than the right of free movement.' Expressed concern at the 'moral deterioration' of urban Fijians, however, disguised real fears that the large scale migration to the town centres was a bid for freedom from 'tribal discipline and from the obligation to perform social services'. It was intolerable that Fijians should be allowed to revel in the (alleged) decadence and indolence of urban life 'when they should be doing useful work in their own villages.' The effect of the legislation was to restrengthen the chiefly system; to consolidate a class structure which promised social stability and continuing European dominance.
Notwithstanding the economic advantages of directing surplus Fijian labour to the mines, colonial policy was not easily wedded to the idea of a permanent workforce, preferring to prevent the creation of a large industrial proletariat. The removal of Fijians from the restraining influences of traditional society raised the awkward prospect of finding alternative means of social control. But the regulation of the labour market had an economic purpose as well: it would '...prevent(s) a class of Fijians divorced from tribal associations and dependent for their livelihood on the economic conditions of the labour market'. The low cost structure of Fijian labour was thus seen to a great extent as reliant on the continued vitality of the village economy and society.

Official commitment to satisfying the needs of capitalist enterprise while ensuring the viability of village society had a decisive impact on the new mining industry. Market conditions were, on the whole, favourable to the extraction of a large and cheap supply of unskilled labour, but it soon became evident that the demands of compulsory village and district work induced an extremely high turnover amongst Fijian workers. This raised the costs of production and reduced labour efficiency. In the early stages of production at least, when mostly open-cut mining was undertaken, there was no need for a permanent workforce. However, as both the Tavua and Mt Kasi companies complained bitterly and frequently, the industry required labour that would stay more than a few months or some 'continuity of employment'. Both interests held communal labour demands largely responsible for the high turnover.
Turnover at Mt Kasi in 1936, some five years after it had come into production, was around 30% a month and there were often more extreme weekly fluctuations. The basis on which Fijians engaged in this remote hinterland was highly unsatisfactory for, as the company charged, 'almost all the Fijians use the mine merely as an opportunity to acquire ready money quickly, and, when the immediate need is satisfied, leave the mine without warning.' Theodore too protested that in the early months much of the labour engaging at his group of mines remained no more than a few weeks at a time. As at Mt Kasi, the average period of employment at Tavua was two or three months by 1936.

Complaints acquired the force of ultimatums, Theodore warning that it would be 'uneconomical...to rely upon Fijians for our main labour force' and the Mt Kasi company delivering a more direct threat that it would 'get(ting) rid of its Fijian labour altogether if the position cannot be remedied.' From the middle of 1936, as the grip of gold fever relaxed and the two interests secured virtual monopolies over the main mining areas, the formal intervention of the state appeared both logical and necessary. It was not, however, to be undertaken without difficulties.

Efforts to secure a more stable supply of mine labour flew in the face of intensifying protest from the chiefs to curb movement out of the villages; they stirred the residual forces of conservatism within the administration itself; and they rebuffed the spirit of prevailing international opinion on the recruitment of wage labour. An international labour convention adopted in 1936 urged that the social, political and economic welfare of recruited labour be adequately safeguarded; and the Colonial Office had drawn this to
the attention of the local government as early as 1934 when the convention was still in its draft stages. Responding, the administration clung fiercely to one of the most enduring myths of official ideology:

...the number of natives recruited for contract service is small, and there are no large movements of labour which might have serious sociological effects upon the race. There is no economic necessity for the natives to become wage-earners for long periods, and no pressure of any description is placed upon them to enter into contracts of service... 6

It was article four of the convention that was especially relevant to the colony's new goldmining industry. This recommended that

Before approving for any area any scheme of economic development which is likely to involve the recruiting of labour, the competent authority shall take such measures as may be practicable and necessary -

a) to avoid the risk of pressure being brought to bear on the populations concerned by or on behalf of the employers in order to obtain the labour required;

b) to ensure that, as far as possible, the political and social organisation of the populations...and their powers of adjustment to the changed economic conditions will not be endangered by the demand for labour; and

c) to deal with any other possible untoward effects of such development on the populations concerned. 7

The Colonial Office was assured that the effects of the 'voluntary' flow of mine labour would be closely watched and, if necessary, controlled under the Native Regulations. 8

For the colonial state, the dislocation to the subsistence economy and traditional social system caused by out-migration had to be weighed against the benefits of enhanced Fijian participation in the economic development of the colony, whether through commercial agriculture or wage labour. Communal work and the production of cash crops were not mutually exclusive, the Acting Secretary for
Native Affairs pressed impatiently upon one Provincial Commissioner in 1936: 'I see no reason why both cannot work together, Fijians are not so busy that they have no time for both.' Where Fijians showed 'ability and willingness to do agricultural work', bulis were instructed to use their 'discretion' in calling men back for housebuilding or other tasks.

The diversion of village labour to industrial employment, in this case the gold mines, appeared, however, to have a more drastic social and economic impact. As the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs described the situation in 1937, only two years after the Emperor mine had come into production:

The future of the Fijian under the rapidly changing conditions of the Colony, particularly his employment in large numbers on the gold fields, is a matter that has exercised my mind for some time past. Two grave dangers appear to face the Fijian under the present conditions that are depleting the villages of their able-bodied men.

They are the health of the race and the lowering of its moral standards. With villages left to the care of the aged, the women, and the children, living conditions are deteriorating and insanitary villages the result. These in turn will undoubtedly materially affect the health of the community.

On the mine fields, at the mills, and on plantations, but more particularly the first, large numbers of virile men are living in lines or barracks, as at Tavua, with a few native villages in more or less close proximity. It would be absurd to maintain for a moment that the moral standard of these men and the women with whom opportunity permits them to associate will not suffer.

There was no single, consensual approach to the problem within the administration but there was tacit agreement that the employment of Fijians as wage labour was not itself under fire or even examination. In Monckton's opinion, the 'indiscriminate recruiting amongst the Fijian villages' had to be stopped and a maximum
percentage of able-bodied males - calculated according to population size and other variables such as sickness, the rate of absenteeism, natural disasters, and the 'desire' for work - be allowed to enter contracts.12 His proposal was not a new one. (see chapter one) And in respect of mine labour, it was also not without a precedent. In 1935, Theodore had been advised by Reay that the government intended to restrict the number of men leaving their villages during the 'working' (i.e. communal work) months to 25%. But, without the force of law, it was hardly surprising that this regulation had in practice proved 'the exception rather than the rule'. In his own province, Reay complained, there were villages 'where as much as 95% of my taxpayers are permanently absent and where in consequence it is impossible to maintain essential services.'13

Monckton's proposals for more effective control of the labour flow to the mines were fully supported by A.L. Armstrong, Personal Assistant to the Colonial Secretary, who argued that the industry's demands could potentially threaten the very survival of the Fijian social system. Because the problem was not simply one of recruitment, what was needed was the revision both of the labour laws and the native regulations. Monckton supported Armstrong but expressed concern that any measures taken did not 'hamper the employers of labour'.14 His ambivalence was shared by Reay who, while conscious of the food shortages and unhealthy living conditions that were occurring, accepted unreservedly that an adequate labour supply was a sine qua non of mining capitalism.15

The Colonial Secretary, Juxon Barton exhibited little of their ambivalence and few if any of their anxieties. The proposals for stricter control simply ran counter to what he perceived to be an
indomitable process of social change, of which the steady disintegration of the communal system was a part. Barton's chief concern was over the obstruction that further regulations might bring to the supply of labour. As he admitted to the Governor, article four of the Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention made him feel 'a little nervous' at its likely hindrance to economic development. 16

Actions, of course, spoke louder than words; and the colony's labour and native legislation remained unchanged. Even the specific measures proposed by the chiefs - an increase in the absentee tax, tighter restrictions over indenture including the need for a buli's permission and a reduction in the number of months that a Fijian could be legally absent from his village - were rejected or ignored. 17 The labour laws were a continuing testimony to the political strength of European capital, in particular the planters and the CSR. And while official policy stood committed in theory to regulating migration to the mines, the demands of mining capital were ultimately met.

By 1937, the gold industry was on a secure footing and had five producing mines to its credit. In the same year, the Native Regulations Board ruled that prevailing legislation sufficed to curb the tide of rural out-migration, and in 1938, Monckton instructed that

It is particularly desired that there shall be no harassing of the class of Fijians who are engaged in legitimate employment. 18

As Theodore had recognised some years earlier, government policy did not conflict but, on the contrary, coexisted harmoniously with the labour needs of his companies. 19
State intervention in the mine labour market took explicit form in the practical assistance given by administrative officers as unofficial recruiters of labour; the introduction of informal recruitment schemes in a number of provinces; the de facto modification of native policy to permit and encourage the stabilisation of labour; the attempts to involve official chiefs in recruitment; and the support for Fijian indenture under the controversial and largely discredited terms of 19th century labour law. The effect of these measures was to transform an irregular and arbitrary pattern of supply which allowed Fijians a certain degree of freedom to withdraw their labour, into a more rationalised system of mobilisation.

The warning from Mt Kasi was not taken lightly, and once it had resolved that it was vital to 'keep Fijian labour on the job and not let others in', the government acted swiftly and decisively. Directives were issued to European district officers to ensure that the mine had a regular supply of Fijian labour including some (of the more skilled men) committed to at least one year's service. From July 1936, a series of recruitment schemes were introduced in Bua and Cakaudrove. While of direct benefit to capital, the regular rotation of labour - eighty men every three months in the first of Bua's ventures - also went some way to meeting the demands of the chiefs. In turn, the incorporation of the chiefs into the management of the schemes was politic as well as expedient. As the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs remarked laconically: 'If labour can be arranged through the chiefs - the chiefs will not call them back.'
Mt Kasi engaged a Fijian chief (approved by the provincial council) as its recruiting agent in Bua, granting him an exclusive right to supplying it with labour. A prominent chief and head of the local administration, Ratu George Toganivalu, supervised the scheme with the co-operation of two European government officials. In less than a year, suspicion over the integrity of the recruiting agent had censured the experiment and brought about its collapse. The government was not deterred from embarking on another venture. In December, it arranged for 40 men to be supplied every three months. Dubbed 'a more elastic agreement', this paradoxically centralised the organisational basis of recruitment: the operation was placed under the direct control of the roko.

The new agreement was significant in two respects. First, an official chief was required to mobilise, not simply to oversee or regulate Fijian mine labour. And second, adjustments in the communal work programme were made in order to accommodate fluctuations in the demand for labour. This was done by dispersing communal duties over the year, a practice also approved for other provinces. By 1938, the Provincial Commissioner of Bua recorded gratefully that:

A constant supply of labour to the Mt Kasi Gold Mines has been maintained and controlled during the year in order to ensure well kept Villages without interfering with Mine reqs[sic] by the sudden withdrawal of men for village and district work.

Like the Mt Kasi company, the Theodore group involved local chiefs and government officials directly in the recruitment process. Its employment of Fijians as 'professional' recruiters was not, however, extensive. Between 1934 and 1937, a two-man team comprising a chief and the son of a local European planter was assigned to the task of
procuring labour from Vanua Levu; but on the whole official chiefs appear to have participated on an informal basis. Officers of the district administration acted in a similar capacity - following up requests for labour, advising the companies where and when men were available, and generally assisting in the organisation of group recruitment and labour transportation.

Regular entries made in official diaries submitted to the colonial secretariat indicated that the labour situation at the mines was an issue of priority. While District Commissioner of Lau, Ratu Sukuna even acquired in secretariat correspondence the dubious designation of unofficial 'recruiter' for Theodore's mines. His successor (J. Goepel) maintained the link between the province and the group as Sukuna's role within the ranks of the central administration became more versatile: he helped locate labour from other regions and, as chapter six demonstrates, played a key part in the control of recalcitrant mineworkers.

The close working relationship over the supply of mine labour was exemplified in February 1936 following an outburst of communal violence which left the group stricken by a sudden and critical shortage. Theodore's personal entreaty to the local District Commissioner 'to do all that can reasonable [sic] be done to cooperate with my companies in replacing labour' led to prompt refurbishment. No labour was available locally but the officer held discussions to ascertain the precise requirements of the three mines. Through his 'courtesy and cooperation' and that of the Native Assistant Commissioner and Native Stipendiary Magistrate Yasawa, Filimoni Kama, a total of 80 'Yasawa boys' were dispatched by provincial boat for Tavua. Many were married, and copra production
and housebuilding, it was admitted, demanded their services at home. Another 188 men were sent by the Roko Tui Macuata from Vanua Levu.

With the assistance of the colonial government, the group also tested a number of strategies to reduce the mobility of mine labour. Because of its proximity and the fact that it was generally 'voluntary' (i.e. not under contract), labour from the neighbouring districts was prone to high turnover. The group's expanding demands and the competition for labour on Viti Levu during the gold rush had aggravated the problem and had an inflationary effect on wages. (see chapter four) In addition, the dislocation of banana exports caused by movements out of Colo East, Naitasiri and Namosi had prompted official investigation into the whole question of recruitment from these areas. Bulis had been instructed to 'discourage' the trend and at least one District Commissioner had successfully intercepted a group leaving their district for the Tavua mines. The government's wish to maintain the colony's banana quotas at this time may well have influenced the group's decision to diversify the provincial composition of its Fijian workforce.

Migrant labour under contract offered to solve the twin problems of periodic shortage and a highly mobile labour supply. Though recruitment from further afield was more expensive on account of transport and other costs, this policy shift had numerous advantages. The group was assured of longer serving labour at fixed wages; and greater control because groups of between 20 and 100 men often came under the direct management of local chiefs. The
distance from home and the irregular shipping services connecting Viti Levu with the outer islands also made it more difficult for men to abscond.

From 1936, the associated companies began to indenture Fijian labour under written contract for between six and twelve months. Within two months they had signed on about 180 men, more than half their total Fijian strength at that time.\textsuperscript{34} While brief, the period of formal indenture was significant as a measure of state support for mining capital. Mine contracts were permitted under the Masters and Servants Ordinance despite the appalling effects of its use by plantation labour during the 1920's and the legal controversy that had surfaced - following the enactment of the Employment Ordinance in 1912 - over its general applicability to Fijian wage labour. (see chapter one)

It was an unexpected coup for the companies. The opinion of the Chairman of the Mining Board was that the ordinance was unsuitable for application to the mining industry;\textsuperscript{35} and privately, even Theodore was resigned to the possibility that 'we may have to comply with all the conditions provided in [the Fijian Labour] Ordinance...\textsuperscript{36} He judiciously left the matter with Sir Henry Scott who had long been involved with the murky business of framing and interpreting local labour legislation. The outcome was extremely favourable: apart from requiring two improvements in the group's proposed rations schedule, and provision for medical care in accordance with Section 17 of the Labourers' Medical Care Ordinance of 1891, the government approved the engagement of mine labour under
the Masters & Servants Ordinance. In principle, Scott advised the companies, they could 'ignore the provisions of the Fijian Labour Ordinance 1875'.

Yet formal indenture proved less popular as a method of recruitment than unwritten contracts of group employment. This alternative offered capital the benefits of immobilised labour like fixed wages and enhanced control, while sparing it the official scrutiny of contracts and other liabilities under labour law. Terms of engagement had neither the scope of 'formal' contracts in respect of minimum housing standards or medical provisions, for example, or the force of law. Labour thus had no legal claim to even the paltry benefits extended under existing legislation.

For these reasons as well as for others, the system was cheaper: there were fewer expenses, lower transport costs and no obligatory tax advances. In August 1936, the companies estimated that the cost of recruiting Fijian labour under written contract averaged £5/7/6 per head (exclusive of rations and wages). In sharp contrast, the engagement of Yasawa men under informal contracts in February the same year cost them approximately 12/6 a head.

District officers or official chiefs often arranged for the transportation of labour to and from the mines by government or provincial boats, thus affording the companies a convenience as well as cost savings. Theodore did not hesitate to propose this arrangement himself. In respect of Lauan labour, he wrote casually to Ratu Sukuna:

...it might be convenient for you to allow your Provincial cutter to visit Tavua twice a year to bring new men and take others back to their homes.
Later, he made this a condition of employing 'Lau boys'. The reliance on provincial vessels caused problems for they had other commitments and a limited carrying capacity. For time-expired labourers, this meant delays in returning home, and, almost certainly, diminished or no savings by the time they got there.

Under the 1912 Employment Ordinance, it was obligatory for labourers indentured from districts outside their own to have their return fares paid by their employers, whatever the length of service. The arrangement Theodore negotiated privately with Ratu Sukuna, however, was that Lauan labour would be returned at the group's expense if a minimum of six months employment was undertaken. A single fare only was paid for men who engaged for three to six months which meant that the latter had also to meet the cost of food for the duration of the voyage home, the trip to Lau lasting about a week.

In addition, casual arrangements made in respect of six to twelve month contracts enabled the companies to deduct from a labourer's wages the cost of board and lodging (in Suva), if the end of a contract did not coincide with a shipping run home. Correspondence between Emperor and the Native Affairs Department over the rotation of two batches of Lauan labour in 1937 suggests that the administration was willing to accept the responsibility for stranded labour. The government vessel bringing new men, the company advised the department, could take the retiring party back to Lau. An official minute registered no protest at the instruction, noting simply that '...we must provide for transport else we will have 33 hungry Lauans on our verandah.'
The recruiting services rendered by chiefs and government officials to the mining companies did not escape the scrutiny of the colonial secretariat. But although they flouted international conventions and even deviated from practice in other areas of the British Empire, their activities were not unduly curtailed. Article nine of the Recruiting of Indigenous Workers Convention prohibited recruitment by public officers for private concerns, unless the labour was required for public works. Article ten forbade chiefs or 'other indigenous authorities' to 'act as recruiting agents'; to 'exercise pressure upon possible recruits'; or to 'receive from any source whatsoever any special remuneration or other special inducement for assistance in recruiting'. The colonial government agreed to apply the convention in February 1937 but no legislation was introduced to sanction this for ten years.

Article nine of the convention caused some ripples of apprehension within the administration but Reay, now Industrial Relations Officer, argued that it tacitly permitted officers to direct taxpayers seeking work to places of employment. Confessing that he had often 'assisted' taxpayers in this way, his interpretation was, predictably, a liberal one. Its validity was another matter. The International Labour Conference had, indeed, warned against the subtle use of authority:

It has often been observed...that the position of the administrative officer is such that his wish is often equivalent to a command, and if...generally permitted...would not be far removed from compulsion to labour...

Further, it had declared the recruitment of labour to be incompatible with labour supervision.
Following the enactment of the 1947 Labour Ordinance which expressly prohibited chiefs or government officers from recruiting directly or indirectly, the colonial state became more sensitive to the tenuous grounds on which the defence of its role in the labour market rested. The distinction between guidance and procurement was now acknowledged to be a fine one and district officials were given the following warning:

It is appreciated that occasions arise when a Chief or a Buli discusses with his people the question of raising money for some public purpose by means of the labour of some of the able-bodied men of a tikina, and that difficulty may arise in determining whether the part of a Chief or Buli plays in such discussions amounts to assisting in the procurement of recruits. District Officers should use their discretion in such cases, the important consideration to bear in mind being that Chiefs and public officers should not use their rank or authority to induce Fijians to engage with a private employer. A distinction must be drawn between on the one hand making known an offer of employment by an employer and on the other hand canvassing on his behalf for recruits. 48

Recourse to indenture was not the only, nor indeed the most effective, remedy to the problem of turnover. Time restrictions on the employment of single workers could be easily circumvented by acquiring exemption from communal duties. The companies applied for this, paid the obligatory commutation fees, and then reclaimed them from their workers by wage deductions. A longer term solution was to provide housing for married recruits with their families. Men could then legitimately remain in employment for an indefinite period. A proposal along these lines was made to Theodore by Reay (then District Commissioner Colo North) in 1935 and from the following year, the group embarked on a housing programme involving the construction of what were aptly described as 'individual cubicles'. 49
The release under Fijian labour law of married men who took their immediate dependants compromised other regulations aimed at restricting entry on to the labour market, protecting community living standards, and conserving the communal system itself. Labourers took only their wives - the unit vital for the reproduction of labour - and possibly their children, but not members of their extended family towards whom they also had traditional responsibilities. Social as well as economic dislocation was thus implicitly sanctioned.

For the mining companies, the contradictions inherent in colonial policy presented few problems. Overall, official policy helped to bring about a degree of labour stabilisation in the early years. By 1938, all married men housed at Vatukoula had been employed for a minimum of eighteen months to two years. And assured that the government's wish was to 'facilitate ... the permanent departure from the communal system of Fijians who are offered skilled employment and training of a more or less permanent character', the group was given more concrete support when, in 1940, the commutation rate for single men was reduced by 10/- and total exemption was granted to married men with dependants.

As economic conditions deteriorated during the late 1930's, active recruitment and other non-economic devices aimed at stabilising labour became increasingly redundant. Plunging copra prices forced European plantations to close and scores of Fijians particularly from the Yasawa Islands, Kadavu and Lau swamped the mine labour market. Faced with a rising surplus and the tiresome fact that 'although they are turned away they still continue to come back seeking work', the mining companies could, of course, take heart
from the fact that, if needed, 'there [were] hundreds awaiting employment' in the villages.\textsuperscript{53} Such conditions facilitated stringent wage control as well as encouraging longer periods of service. (see chapter four)
VI The Labour Crisis of the 1940's

From the end of 1941, the various factors which had combined so well to satisfy the labour needs of mining capital were thrown off course. An improvement in the copra price to £18 a ton prompted large numbers of Fijian as well as half-caste workers to leave the mines.¹ With the colony drawn into the international conflict, the offer of higher wages and other more favourable terms of employment in government defence works, the CSR, firms like Morris Hedstrom, and ancilliary jobs for the American forces - 'chiefly through taking in [their] washing!'² - lured still more away to the main centres of Suva and Nadi.³

Beyond the inevitable dislocation to labour supply caused by military recruitment, the effects of a competitive labour market were crippling for the mining industry. Having lost nearly half their European staff at the beginning of the war, the Tavua companies were faced in 1942 with the withdrawal of 1,345 employees, 1,219 of whom were Fijian. By the following year, their total workforce was reduced to 873.⁴ The situation deteriorated as restrictions were placed on the importation of necessary materials and equipment, shipping services were disrupted, and power was rationed (due to the loss of two dynamos 'by enemy action'). All were blamed for the falling rate of production - this by as much as one-third between April and June 1942. Shortly afterwards, the group was forced to consider the bleak possibility of a partial close down.⁵

The importance of gold production to colonial and imperial interests dictated direct state intervention. It was necessary to forestall
the immediate loss of revenue and the deleterious long-term effect on economic development that would follow a shut down of operations, as well as to improve Britain's purchasing power of dollars at a crucial time of combat. The colonial government accordingly sought to boost the industry's fast dwindling labour supply. The classification of goldmining as 'essential' to the war effort legitimised its involvement in an area which the Governor privately acknowledged to be the responsibility of the mining companies and the use of recruitment methods more akin to conscription. For the duration of the war, at least a few hundred Fijians were effectively 'forced' to accept employment at the mines.

While supporting the continued production of gold during the war, the Colonial Office was unwilling to condone any initiatives which exercised compulsion on Fijians to do mine work. The colony's request in 1942 that it 'countenance an extension of definition of essential industry for which labour can be ordered to work' was therefore rejected. The absence of legal powers 'to order men not engaged in mining to engage in it' was not, however, to prove inhibiting in practice. Encouraged no doubt by the home government's agreement that it could '...persuade labour [excluding those on military duties] to return to mines voluntarily', the Governor took the position that

If...there is anything we can do to induce men to stay at the mines or go back to them we should do it.

Contrary to a ruling by the Colonial Office, mineworkers - numbering over 100 on one single occasion - who had been drafted into the defence services as part of the mines territorial company were released on the government's orders. Men who subsequently applied
for defence work were rejected. To make this watertight, it became obligatory for all mine employees to have the Governor's permission before they could enlist in the forces.

In December 1942, officers responsible for administering the provinces of Colo North, Ra, Colo West and Nadroga in the western and central districts of Viti Levu received instructions aimed at safeguarding existing supplies and mobilising more labour for the mines. Time-expired contract labour at Nadi airport was one possible source of supplementary manpower and it was decided 'to encourage some of these returnees after a reasonable period at home to seek employment at the Mines.' The message of the Adviser on Native Affairs was a simple one:

You should use your best endeavours whenever opportunities occur to persuade the existing labour to remain at the mines, as well as to help in securing labour when required.

Specific labour requests from the mines' management were handled directly by the Commissioner of Labour (Reay) in liaison with Ratu Sukuna and Fijian representatives from selected provinces.

The significance of this political pressure went beyond the labour supply it successfully generated and the liberal interpretation given to Colonial Office directives. Saddled with its own problem of maintaining adequate manpower for the war industry, the government had conducted a recruitment campaign that, by the end of 1942, had 'just about skinned the villages.' 'Nearly all native labour,' Reay admitted, could be 'classed as conscript, for we get them by instructing Rokos to use their influence as chiefs to send them in.'
Reports from numerous provinces bemoaned the serious depletion of local reserves and its economic and social consequences. A general report on manpower in the colony concluded in 1942 'that insufficient men remain to maintain the life of the community and to supply casual labour for maintaining roads and local industries'. In the province of Bua, only 302 out of 1,013 able-bodied males between the ages of 18 and 60 remained in the villages; while in Ra, where the largest Fijian population in the central district was to be found, dislocation appeared even more drastic: the Roko Tui Ra was unable to comply with orders to recruit labour for the mines because not 'a single man' could be mustered. In March 1943, the mines' management was advised by the Acting Colonial Secretary that whilst all steps will be taken to ensure that your labour supply is disturbed as little as possible, the Labour and National Service Board has reported that there is insufficient labour in the Colony to meet all the demands for essential services, and therefore, it is inevitable that there will be some shortage.

Labour shortages in the mining industry persisted into the late 1940's in spite of the steady reduction in defence work, government assistance over recruitment, and two wage adjustments. The problem at Loloma and Dolphin remained 'very acute' and although the total workforce for the three concerns had climbed to 1,192 by December 1945, and the demand for surface workers was met, underground and open-cut labour was still about one-third below requirements. The austerity of post-war conditions, in particular soaring living costs, slowly pushed numbers closer to pre-war levels - to 1,641 by the end of 1946 - but gains were soon offset by the combined bogeys of buoyant copra prices, competitive wages outside the industry, and a mine strike in 1947.
If the prominent feature of the mine labour market during the late 1940's was the perennial shortages of Fijian and half-caste labour, the problem was to find an inspired solution in the shifting racial distribution of workers that took effect during the following decade. This was to be closely linked with the group's pressing need to reduce the cost of its labour. (see chapter seven)

The crisis of the 1940's did not appear to impede the structural transformation taking place in the mine labour market. The steady displacement of short term migrant labour by a growing proportion of semi-permanent and permanent workers had begun around the late 1930's. By 1939 - within five years of active mining on the Tavua field - a sample of nearly 500 Fijian workers revealed that 51% had been in continuous employment for periods ranging from between six months and 5½ years (an average of 1½ years) and 25% for at least 2½ years. Ten years later, management estimated that approximately one-third of its Fijian workers were married and settled at the mines with their families.

The proletarianisation of mine labour was embryonic, yet these early years of goldmining witnessed the successful application of strategies designed to meet the need for more stabilised labour. The political as well as the economic and social factors discussed in this chapter were crucial to preparing the ground for a more complete transition by the 1950's.
CHAPTER THREE – REFERENCES

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2. Recruitment of Native Labour Correspondence July 1934–April 1935, Miscellaneous No 450 Confidential, Fiji & Western Pacific No 35, CSO F36/11.


4. Leg Co Debates, Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna, 27.4.38.

5. See C.A.

6. Nilsen General Manager EGM, LGMNL and FMD to Manager CSR Co, 6.12.45, Vat/Govt Mines Dept, CSR Co etc.

7. Managing Director EGM to Secretary Emperor Mines Ltd Melbourne, 30.6.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-. Interviews with Ruskin Ward, Suva, July 1980 and Alan Blatchford, Sydney Sept 1982. Other theories put forward by European staff employed during the 1940's and 1950's included the group's concern to avoid the high risk of gold thefts anticipated if Indians were employed in large numbers; and the belief that Indians were physically too frail to be able to meet the exacting demands of mine work.

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9. Nilsen to Theodore, 10.11.38, Vat/Confidential to 1940.

10. D.T. Mitchell, Mine Superintendent to General Manager EGM Confidential, 20.7.48, Vat/.

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15. This description of Rotumans was given by the Acting Resident Commissioner for Rotuma in 1937. See Acting Resident Commissioner Rotuma to CS Annual Report for 1936, 2.4.37, CSO F24/5 Pt 2.

16. Acting Governor (Barton) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 27.5.36, CSO F111/31 Pt 1.


18. Calculated from employment statistics given in Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.


20. Managing Director EGM to DC Ba, 11.2.36, SNA N44/15/4.

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Section II

1. Ratu Sukuna minute, 24.7.48 in Caldwell (for Secretary for Fijian Affairs) to Financial Secretary, 27.7.48, CSO F37/307. Also see Annual Reports of District Commissioners particularly for Bua, Macuata, the Savusavu District of Cakaudrove, Lau, Colo North, Ra and Rewa. Extracts of these can be found in the Annual Reports of the Secretary for Native Affairs (e.g. CP No 18, 1937 & CP No 42, 1938), while the full texts are located in the CSO correspondence files, series F11/, F18/, F102/, F15/, F13/, F22/, F23/. 


4. Native Lands Trust Ordinance, No 12, 1940. 

5. Leg Co Debates, Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna 


8. Stanner, op. cit. p245. 

9. Much later, the limited participation of Fijians in the CSR training scheme was attributed to the high proportion of cane land under lease to non-Fijians. Roth, G.K. Native Administration in Fiji During the Past 75 Years: A Successful Experiment in Indirect Rule, Occasional Paper No 10, The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain & Ireland, 1951. See too Stanner op. cit. p244. Stanner also notes the lack of capital and training (mentioned below) as additional obstacles to Fijian participation in cane farming. 

10. The Indian population in Ra for example rose from 2,421 to 4,562 (88%), compared to a 4.2% increase in the Fijian population. See Census Reports for 1921 & 1936. 

11. The reasons for opposing land reclamation by Fijians were that land allegedly went out of cultivation and rents were lost. See Governor's Address, 13.10.33, CP No 30, 1933.
12. ibid; Pim, Sir Alan Colonial Agricultural Production: The Contribution made by Native Peasants and by Foreign Enterprise, London: OUP, 1946; DC Rewa District Annual Report for 1932, CSO F23/7 Pt 1; DC Colo East Annual Report for 1938, CSO F13/1 Pt 2; Secretary for Native Affairs Annual Report for 1936, CP No 18, 1937.


14. DC Ra Annual Report for 1936, CSO F22/3 Pt 1.

15. For some years, the Provincial Council of Lautoka experimented with guaranteeing returns on CSR advances, the benefits of which were evident in improved cane yields. See SNA N2/8/Pt 1.

16. See for example DC Ra Half-yearly and Annual Reports for 1935, CSO F22/3 Pt 1.


18. General Manager (Sydney) to Manager Rarawai Mill Private, 2.3.32, CSR 142/1089; General Manager (Sydney) to Manager Rarawai Mill Private, 17.4.31, CSR 142/1088; Manager to General Manager (Sydney), 28.9.25, CSR 142/3394.

19. Colonial Office Despatch to Governor, C083/228/85139.

20. Caldwell (for Secretary for Fijian Affairs) to Financial Secretary, 17.4.48, CSO F37/307.

21. DC Colo North & East Annual Report for 1937, CSO F13/1 Pt 2.


23. The 1936 census of the colony established that the density per square mile of the province was 17.5% which compared very favourably with other provinces. CP No 42, 1936.

24. DC Colo North & East (Reay) to CS, 11.4.38, CSO F13/1 Pt 2.

25. DC Colo North & East Annual Report for 1932, CSO F13/1 Pt 1.

26. ibid

27. See Colo North Provincial Council Reports 1932–1933 showing a decrease from 19/- to 11/-.

28. Note by Provincial Commissioner, Colo North Provincial Council Report Oct 1934. At a Special Council in December 1935, Savatu was exempted from payment of the education rate; and between 1938 to 1940, the same ruling was applied to Nadrau. However, four of the six hill districts were required to pay the education rate - two at 10/- and two at 5/- - in 1941. See Colo North Provincial Council Report Nov 1941.

30. In 1933, the prison sentence for tax defaulters was increased from one to three weeks, the biscuit ration cut, and prison discipline made stricter. DC Colo North & East to CS, 25.5.35, Annual Report for 1934, CSO F13/1 Pt 1.

31. Note by Provincial Commissioner, Colo North Provincial Council Report Nov 1937. See CSO F13/1 Pt 1 for official attitude to the establishment of the gold mines in Colo North.

32. DC Colo North Annual Report for 1936, CSO F13/1 Pt 1.

33. See DC Ra Half-yearly and Annual reports for 1935, CSO F22/3 Pt 1; DC Ra Annual Report for 1932, CSO F22/3 Pt 1.

34. Twyford & Wright op. cit.

35. DC Ra to CS, 18.2.36, in DC Ra Annual Report for 1935, CSO F22/3 Pt 1; DC Ra to CS, 18.2.37, in DC Ra Annual Report for 1936, CSO F22/3 Pt 1; DC Ra to CS, 20.2.38, in DC Ra Annual Report for 1937, CSO F22/3 Pt 2.

36. See DC Ra to CS, 20.2.38, in DC Ra Annual Report for 1937, CSO F22/3 Pt 2; DC Ra monthly diary for June 1938, CSO F22/5 Pt 7; Ra Provincial Council Reports 1940 and 1941.


39. In 1932, for example, a special sitting of the provincial council unanimously resolved that its people would build a market at Vaileka. It was proposed that certain districts would provide the labour and others would be responsible for feeding the workers. See Ra Special Provincial Council Report June 1932, Resolution II.

40. See C.A. and SNA N50/1/2.

41. Ra Provincial Council Reports 1934, 1936, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1943; Adviser on Native Affairs Annual Report for 1938, CP No 36, 1939; DC Ra monthly diary for June 1938, CSO F22/5 Pt 7.

42. Twyford & Wright op. cit.

43. ibid
44. Secretary for Native Affairs Annual Report for 1930, CP No 37, 1931; Governor's Address, CP No 1, 1938; Governor's Address, 25.11.38, CP No 23, 1938. For Fijian criticism of the banana marketing/licensing system see for example Colo East Provincial Council Report Nov 1937 and Naitasiri Provincial Council Report Sept 1930.

45. Governor's Address, 12.10.34, CP No 41, 1934; Governor's Address, 1.11.35, CP No 23, 1935; Acting Governor's Address, 23.10.36, CP No 28, 1936.

46. Governor's Address, 13.2.31, CP No 1, 1931; Acting Secretary for Native Affairs Annual Report for 1931, CP No 15, 1932; Governor's Address, 1.9.39, CP No 4, 1939; Adviser for Native Affairs Annual Report for 1938, CP No 36, 1939.

47. Acting Director Agriculture to DC Southern, 20.12.44, SNA N2/24/5; Secretary for Fijian Affairs Annual Report for 1949, CP No 2, 1951; Southern District Annual Reports CSO F23/7 Pt 3.


49. Figures are taken from Naitasiri, Colo East, Ra and Tailevu Provincial Council Reports 1937-1949.


52. DC Lau (J.L.V. Sukuna) Annual Report for 1934, CSO F15/1 Pt 1.

53. For details see DC Annual Reports for these provinces in CSO F15/1, F11/1 and F18/1.

54. A hurricane in 1936, for example, flattened all except three houses on the island of Moce; all its able-bodied men had to migrate to centres of employment for the following two years. See PC Lau monthly diary for April 1937, CSO F15/5 Pt 6; R. Lester for Secretary for Native Affairs to District Engineer, 9.10.37, SNA N44/15/8.

55. CSO F11/1.

56. DC Bua Annual Report for 1932, CSO F11/1.

57. Extract from DC Lau Annual Report for 1932, CSO F15/1 Pt 1.
Section III

1. Vat/Associated Companies Labour Strength in Provinces.

2. Native Taxes Ordinance, No II, 1913. In 1948, the age threshold was raised to 18 years. (Fijian Regulation No VII, 1948).


4. DC Savusavu Annual Report for 1933, CSO F25/1 Pt 1.

5. For details see CSO F15/1 and Lau Provincial Council Reports.


7. Leg Co Debates, Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) 6.11.35.

8. PC Tailevu to Secretary for Native Affairs, 29.6.37, SNA N2/7/3; Leg Co Debates, Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) 6.11.35.

9. DC Savusavu (J. Goepel) Annual Report for 1933, CSO F25/1 Pt 1.

10. Leg Co Debates, Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) 6.11.35.


12. The fine for failure to pay the provincial rate was originally set at 5/- in 1912. In 1927, it was raised to £2 and an imprisonment term of three months introduced in cases where this could not be recovered. The maximum fine was again raised in 1948 to £5 and although the prison term was reduced to one month, provision was made for this to be inflicted in addition to the fine.

13. The Provincial Council Reports of Ra, Tailevu, Bua, Lau and Colo North during the 1930's and 1940's provide good detail of this.

14. Tailevu Provincial Council Report 1936; PC Tailevu to Secretary for Native Affairs, 29.6.37, SNA N2/7/3; Ra Provincial Council Report 1940; Secretary for Fijian Affairs Annual Report for 1948, CP No 27, 1949. By 1951, the average rate of tax defaulting in the Southern District was still as high as 33%. Taking the colony as a whole, defaulting rated 14.1% in 1951, 18.4% in 1952, 12.4% in 1953, 15.1% in 1954, 26% in 1955 and 12.7% in 1956. See District Commissioners Annual Reports for 1951, CP No 1, 1953 and CP No 35, 1957.

16. District Commissioners Annual Reports Southern & Eastern Districts for 1948, CP No 11, 1949. A similar sentiment was expressed by the Deputy Secretary for Fijian Affairs when the government proposed the introduction of a land tax in 1948. Caldwell (for Secretary for Fijian Affairs) to Financial Secretary, 17.4.48, CSO F37/307.

17. Ra Provincial Council Report 1941. Other examples of this can be found in Tailevu Provincial Council Reports 1939-1942 and Bua Provincial Council Report 1939.

Section IV

1. Cyril Belshaw has concluded that 'Traditional society had within it many elements of mobility and flexibility, and was weak in elements of formal co-ordination. Modern administration has emphasized authority and has created, in certain limited spheres, autocratic community discipline as an organizational goal, imperfectly achieved in practice...' Belshaw, Cyril Under the Ivi Tree : Society and Economic Growth in Rural Fiji, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964, p125. For discussion of the various principles governing traditional selection of Fijian leaders and social organisation, see Nayacakalou, R.R. Leadership in Fiji, Melbourne: OUP, 1975, chapter three. See also France op. cit. chapter seven.

2. See Native Regulations Nos VI and VII, 1927 and Fijian Regulations Nos VI and XIII, 1948. Details of the services and tribute required of Fijians can also be found in the proceedings of the provincial councils held each year. The institution of lala afforded official chiefs a considerable personal labour supply. Taking the 1,272 taxpayers in Ra in 1935 by way of example, it can be calculated on the basis of 18 districts that each buli was entitled to 8 days labour from about 70 men or a total average of 560 days labour a year. Taking the 75 villages comprising the province, it can be similarly estimated that a chief of turaga ni koro rank would be entitled to 192 days labour p.a. (Figures taken from Ra Special Provincial Council Report Dec 1935 and DC Ra to CS, 14.10.36, CSO F9/40.) Chiefs were given the choice of feeding or paying their workers - the second alternative being an unspecified amount.

3. France notes that lala was often not in fact performed for official (non-traditional) chiefs even though this was compulsory.


5. Leg Co Debate on Labour Penal Laws (Repeal) Bill, C/L (Reay) 22.12.43.

6. J.L.V. Sukuna to Theodore, 4.7.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935 -. Examples of group employment undertaken to fund communal projects and of wage deductions requested or approved by chiefs can be found in DC Savusavu District Annual Report for 1936, CSO F25/1 Pt 2; DC Lau monthly diary for Oct 1937, CSO F15/5 Pt 6; Roko Tui Macuata to General Manager EGM, 13.11.52, Vat/; DC Lau (Goepel) to Manager, Morris Hedstrom Shipping Dept, 21.10.37, SNA N44/15/8.

7. R. Lester to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 17.3.37, SNA N44/15/8.

8. PC Tailevu to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 3.5.37, SNA N69/10/3.

9. Buli Waima (Colo East) to Theodore, 18.8.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.
10. Personal Assistant to CS (Armstrong) to CS minute, 16.2.37, CSO F36/11 Pt 2.

11. See DC Rewa Annual Report for 1934, CSO F23/7 Pt 1; DC Colo North Annual Report for 1933, CSO F13/1 Pt 1; Colo North Provincial Council Report 1936, SNA N55/8/1.


13. DC Colo North Annual Report for 1933, CSO F13/1 Pt 1.

14. Examples of the innumerable formal protests by chiefs against out-migration can be found in the proceedings of the Council of Chiefs for 1923, 1933, 1936, 1938, 1940 and 1942; and the Provincial Council Reports for Tailevu 1938 & 1939, Ra 1936, Lomaiviti 1937, Bua 1935 and Namosi 1936.

15. Governor (P.E. Mitchell) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 16.7.43, CP No 24, 1943.

16. Leg Co Debate on Fijian Affairs Regulations, Secretary for Fijian Affairs 22.9.48. The Criminal Offences Code prohibited unauthorised visits by Fijians (lasting more than 7 days) to the main town centres or industrial areas unless they were registered landowners, had been resident for five years, or were in 'permanent employment' in those areas. An offender was liable to repatriation and a fine or (in default) a prison sentence. Fijian Affairs Regulations, No X 1948.

Section V


2. Managing Director EGM to DC Colo North, 3.5.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; Secretary Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to Secretary for Native Affairs, 15.5.36, SNA N44/15/3.

3. DC Savusavu District Half-yearly Report for 1936, CSO F25/1 Pt 1; Secretary Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to Secretary for Native Affairs, 15.5.36, SNA N44/15/3.

4. Managing Director EGM to DC Colo North, 3.5.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; Emperor Annual Report 1936.

5. Managing Director EGM to DC Colo North, 3.5.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; Secretary Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to Secretary for Native Affairs, 15.5.36, SNA N44/15/3.

6. Officer Administering the Government of Fiji to Secretary of State for Colonies, Recruitment of Native Labour Correspondence July 1934-April 1935, Miscellaneous No 450 Confidential, Fiji & Western Pacific No 35, CSO F36/11. See also ibid Colonial Office Circular Despatch, 28 Nov 1934, and previous correspondence regarding the recommendations of the Committee of Experts.


8. Officer Administering the Government of Fiji to Secretary of State for Colonies, Recruitment of Native Labour Correspondence July 1934-April 1935.... CSO F36/11.

9. Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) to PC Tailevu, 7.8.36, SNA N2/7/3.

10. ibid

11. Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) memo Feb 1937, CSO F36/11 Pt 2.

12. ibid

13. DC Colo North (Reay) to Managing Director EGM, 11.5.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935. The 25% maximum was also stipulated for Savusavu district and Bua but was similarly not enforced by law. Acting Secretary for Native Affairs to DC Savusavu and Bua minute, 16.5.36, SNA N44/15/3.

14. Personal Assistant to CS (Armstrong) to CS minute, 16.2.37, CSO F36/11 Pt 2; ibid Acting Secretary for Native Affairs to CS minute, 27.8.36.

15. DC Colo North Annual Report for 1934, CSO F13/1 Pt 1.

16. J.B. to Governor minute, 18.2.37, CSO F36/11 Pt 2.

18. Acting Secretary for Native Affairs to all District Commissioners, 16.8.38, SNA N55/8/1; ibid Meeting of Native Regulations Board, minutes extract, 25.3.37.

19. Managing Director EGM to DC Colo North, 3.5.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

20. Acting Secretary for Native Affairs to DC Savusavu and Bua minute, 16.5.36, SNA N44/15/3.

21. General Manager Mt Kasi to Secretary for Native Affairs, 24.10.36, SNA N44/15/7.

22. Acting Secretary for Native Affairs to DC Savusavu and DC Bua, 16.5.36, SNA N44/15/3.

23. DC Bua Annual Report for 1936, CSO F11/1; General Manager Mt Kasi to Secretary for Native Affairs, 24.10.36, SNA N44/15/7; DC Bua Annual Report for 1937, CSO F11/1.

24. DC Northern to CS memo, 12.10.40, CSO F11/1; DC Bua Annual Report for 1937, CSO F11/1.

25. DC Bua Annual Report for 1938, CSO F11/1.

26. This conclusion is based on written and oral sources. V.S. Spaeth to G.L. Ditchburn, Assistant General Manager EGM, 7.2.37, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; ibid Jovisa Naqivetara file notes 3.6.36-6.7.36; Interview with Ruskin Ward Suva, July 1980. According to Ward, there were two European recruiters in addition to V.S. Spaeth and they were paid £1 for each labourer recruited. Unfortunately, this could not be verified by any documentary evidence and one of the men, Alfie Edwards, interviewed in Suva in 1980, denied having recruited for the companies at any stage.

27. R. Lester to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 21.8.37, SNA N44/15/8.

28. See for example DC Lau (Goepel) to Secretary EGM, 5.6.37, SNA N44/15/8.

29. Managing Director EGM Theodore to DC Ba, 11.2.36, SNA N44/15/4.

30. Minutes of Directors EGM meeting, 21.2.36, Vat/Emperor Mines August 1935-Dec 1939; PC Lautoka to Secretary for Native Affairs, 25.2.36, SNA N44/15/4; ibid DC Ba to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 9.3.36.

31. Roko Tui Macuata to General Manager EGM, March 1936, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--.

32. Managing Director EGM to DC Colo North, 3.5.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.
33. Director of Agriculture (H.W. Jack) to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, 14.8.36, SNA N44/15/1; ibid Director of Agriculture to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, 17.8.36; ibid Stuart Reay PC Colo East to PC Tailevu, minute, 3.9.36. Extract minutes Namosi Provincial Council Meeting, 15.10.36 and related correspondence, CSO F36/16.

34. Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

35. F.R. Charlton Chairman Mining Board to CS, minute, 7.4.36, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.

36. Managing Director EGM to Sir Henry Scott, 10.7.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

37. Sir Henry Scott to Theodore, 17.7.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.


40. Theodore to Ratu Sukuna cable, 7.1.37, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

41. R. Lester to Secretary for Native Affairs, 18.5.37, SNA N44/15/8; ibid R. Lester to Secretary for Native Affairs note, 21.8.37.

42. Secretary EGM Co Ltd to Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, 14.5.37, SNA N44/15/8; ibid R. Lester undated note circa May/June 1937.

43. The Colonial Secretary (Barton) noted that because of its associated abuses, labour recruitment by chiefs in East Africa was 'rigorously forbidden' and recruitment by District Commissioners 'absolutely forbidden'. JB (Barton) to Assistant CS minute, 25.10.40, in DC Bua Annual Report for 1939, CSO F11/1.

44. ILO Convention No 50, 1936.

45. S. Reay (Industrial Relations Officer) minute, 26.10.40, CSO F11/1.


47. Ibid

48. Secretariat Circular No 54 to District Commissioners and District Officers, CSO F36/142 - I.
Another advantage of employing married men was that they were cheaper to ration: the cost of firewood and labour time was passed on to the family. Accordingly, the extra half ration received by a married worker cost the mining companies 6d pdy. in 1949 while the cost of cooking for a single worker was estimated at 1/4 pdy. Secretary (W.J. Mayger) to Chief General Manager, 29.4.49, Vat/. For further discussion of rationing, see chapter four.

Inspector of Mines to Acting Chairman Mining Board, 13.4.38, CSO F36/29.

Managing Director EGM Address to shareholders 28.9.36, Emperor Annual Report 1936.

Community Officer to General Manager, 14.6.40, Vat/LGMNL Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939–1940.

Community Officer to General Manager, 6.9.40, Vat/LGMNL Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939–1940; ibid Community Officer to General Manager, 31.10.40. The Community Officer's four weekly reports between Dec 1939 and Oct 1940 consistently reported a surplus of Fijian labour; and the Service record cards of Fijian employees of the Emperor and Loloma companies show that considerable retrenchment took place between 1938 and 1940. Men were still being turned away in the early months of 1941. See Community Officer (Garnett) to General Manager, 24.1.41 and 22.2.41, Vat/Emperor Period Reports Melbourne Office 1941.
Section VI

1. Nilsen to Theodore cable, 20.2.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941 - Nov 1944.

2. See C.A.

3. Nilsen to Theodore, 20.4.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944; ibid Managing Director memo of meeting with Nilsen, 24.7.42.

4. Theodore, Managing Director to Director General of Manpower Sydney (Personal), 22.5.45, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN; see C.A. and C/L Annual Report for 1945, CP No 8, 1946.

5. C/L Annual Report for 1945, CP No 8, 1946; General Manager (Nilsen) to T.A. Rodgers Emperor Mine, memo, 4.8.43, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944; see C.A.; Nilsen to Theodore cable, 12.7.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944.

6. See C.A.

7. See C.A.

8. See C.A.

9. See C.A.

10. See C.A.

11. See C.A.

12. See C.A.; Nilsen to Emperor and Loloma Mines cable 18.3.42, Vat/Emperor Confidential Feb 1942 - June 1944; Dept Managers Meeting minutes, 14.2.45, Vat/Meetings of Executives - Current File.

13. See C.A.

14. See C.A.

15. See C.A.

16. C/L (Reay) to General Manager Emperor and Loloma Mines, 6.7.43, Vat/Emperor Confidential Feb 1942-June 1944.


19. CP No 17, 1942.

20. ibid; see C.A.
21. See C.A.

22. Dept Managers Meeting minutes, 14.2.45, Vat/Meetings of Executives - Current File; C/L Annual Report for 1945, CP No 8, 1946.

23. C/L Annual Report for 1946, CP No 18, 1947; General Manager EGM to Manager CSR Co, 2.3.48, Vat/Government Mines Dept, CSR Co; Nilsen General Manager to Chairman of Directors Loloma, 24.7.48, Vat/Loloma Budgets, Estimates etc; see C.A.

24. CSO F48/137.

25. Secretary (W.J. Mayger) to Chief General Manager, 29.4.49, Vat/.
CHAPTER FOUR

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS:
A SYSTEM OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

I Introduction: The racial organisation of mine labour and the influence of ideology

The chapter offers an analysis of the nature of exploitation in the mining industry, using as its working definition of exploitation the Marxist notion of capital's appropriation of surplus value. It seeks to demonstrate not only the vast discrepancy between the value of productive labour and the amount returned to labour in the form of subsistence wages, but the specific racial form which exploitation assumed. In particular, attention is given to the range of devices which maximised the exploitation of Fijian labour.

Strategies of labour cost minimisation evident during the 1930's and 1940's were directly influenced by the supply of labour and by the structure of production. The abundance of labour until the early 1940's facilitated tight control of Fijian wages, while the predominance of surface (open-cut) mining lent itself to labour intensive mining methods. To great profit, the associated mining companies were thus able to capitalise on the large reserves of unskilled Fijian labour subject to reduction in its turnover. A racial division of labour and standardisation of wages provided the blue-print of exploitation. Formalised in the broad classifications of Fijians as unskilled labour, half-castes and Rotumans as unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and Europeans as skilled
operators and supervisors, the mines' occupational formula combined elements of racial specificity with racial hierarchy. So too, their structure of earnings categorised and stratified mineworkers according to racial origin.

As observed in the previous chapter, drastic changes occurred in the labour market from the early 1940's, with shortages affecting all classes (skilled and unskilled) and (racial) types of labour with the exception of Indians. Over the same period, open-cut mining progressively gave way to underground stoping on the Emperor mine. This transition inflated production costs largely through the necessary introduction of new plant and equipment and the more complicated and costly process of extracting semi-sulphide rather than oxidised ore. Both developments demanded occupational changes that would bring economies to the overall cost of mine labour.

It was not until the 1950's and 1960's that the racial differentiation of wages and work was to be altered significantly; but the years during and after the second world war witnessed adjustments to the structure of employment designed to permit the promotion of half-castes (and Rotumans) to jobs previously dominated by Europeans, and the allocation to Fijians of work assigned - by convention - to half-castes. This incipient mobility of non-European labour was intended to offset, at least in part, the rising costs of production including the expense of competing in the Australian market for skilled miners and tradesmen.

The role of racialist ideology in shaping not only attitudes but the very principles of job classification in the mining industry raises questions about the compatibility of a system of racial
discrimination with capital accumulation. As early as the 1960's, these questions attracted attention amongst South African scholars, although only in more recent years has this flared into a debate of some prominence between liberal and marxist social scientists. In essence, this has come to focus on the liberal argument that an institutionalised job colour bar has been 'dysfunctional' to the rational development and growth of a capitalist economy. It is a notion which has had far-reaching implications for both the nature of class relations and class struggle in South Africa because it has specifically located the origins of the job colour bar and the resulting polarisation of white and black workers in the racial prejudice of the former.

In Fiji, the absence of a large local European labour supply absolved mining capital of political pressure to construct a formal and legalised system of job reservation which explicitly prohibited the employment of non-Europeans in certain (mainly skilled) categories of work; nor was it obliged to adopt a South African-type 'civilised labour policy' aimed at shielding unskilled Europeans from unemployment and preserving their higher wage levels. In spite of this, the mining industry adopted from its infant years an informal job colour bar, applying it to what was a more racially diversified workforce than that existing in South African mining. That this was progressively modified over time made little real impact on the principle of occupational stratification. It made even less of a mark on the racial structure of earnings that supported it.

Indeed, it is in the fluidity of the job colour bar and the comparative rigidity of the wage colour bar in the Fiji mining
industry that the mechanics of capital accumulation can be unravelled and the economic logic of discrimination perceived. The mines' employment structure was not nearly as inelastic as the racial demarcation of work implied: official classifications disguised the widespread use of Fijians in skilled work but at unskilled rates of pay, while income differentials distinguishing the wages of Europeans, Fijians, Rotumans, Indians and half-castes from each other bore little relation to the real distribution of skills. (see section IV)

The system was politically as well as economically rewarding. The discrimination in favour of Rotumans for example - their allocation at higher rates of pay to jobs also occupied by Fijians, their greater job diversity (as pump attendants, winder drivers, fitters, riggers, stoping miners, and samplers) and their higher rate of mobility to supervisory jobs such as leading hand miner and junior boss - helped to create an aristocracy of labour. A policy which classified Rotumans as half-castes inflated the total cost of 'native' labour and contributed to early industrial unrest, but this unique convention of the mines was advantageous for the conservative influence it exercised on one section of the working class. (see chapter six) It also served as a drawing card to Rotumans seeking employment in the Fiji group. As the mines superintendent observed in 1948, the practice

...has been, and will continue to be a success. It has given the Rotumans a feeling of importance, for at Vatukoula they enjoy better conditions than elsewhere. This is appreciated by Rotumans who endeavour to live up to their improved status. In fact the leaders of their community, in disciplining their less responsible members, point out that they must behave themselves or they may be the cause of all the Vatukoula Rotumans losing all or part of their privileges. This, I think, is the main reason why it will always be possible to attract this class of labour to the field...
Borne out of popular imperial notions of cultural superiority and paternalism, contemporary racist attitudes in Fiji, like other colonies, were to legitimise divergent forms of social and economic discrimination. These did not exist only in the mining industry. On the contrary, it was their ubiquity and official sanction that gave stimulus to the adoption in the industry of a system of accumulation based on the intensive exploitation of non-European labour. Typically, the projection of racial stereotypes in defence of labour division and particularly the exclusion of non-Europeans from certain jobs demanding skill and responsibility, took the form of caricatures. The Inspector of Mines, J.C. Grieves, argued that:

[The Fijian was]...careless, unreliable, inclined to take unnecessary risks and is mentally lethargic.

[The Indian was]...probably the most suitable of the local coloured folk - whilst methodically reliable under routine conditions has...a tendency to carelessness and risks, and although mentally alert, he is of an excitable disposition and thus becomes untrustworthy in dangerous moments.

[The half-caste] was...usually unreliable, quarrelsome and addicted to late hours in his intemperate habits. Physically he is slow and clumsy with a tendency to indolence. He lacks initiative and ambition, requires to be under constant control in most occupations. As a tradesman, where he is extensively used in the Colony, he lacks precision, and the ability to control men; hence he seldom rises from a subordinate position. Where sudden, prompt decisions are vital, he would probably fail through mental inalertness and...relative to Europeans he suffers from an inferiority complex...[to be regarded as] of very doubtful suitability. 8

The crude conclusion of Grieve's argument was that '...it is the white man's prerogative to assume all positions demanding extreme reliability in a dark man's land.'9

The economic irrationality of excluding non-Europeans from certain jobs, however, brought the practice into question and incited
controversy within the administration. In 1934, Sir Murchison Fletcher (Governor) reasoned that the substitution of Europeans by unskilled coloured labour in Asia and 'the tropical world' had reduced a vital unit cost of production. It had as a consequence put countries in those regions at an advantage in a highly competitive international market. It was economic nonsense to pay more than the market price for local unskilled labour even taking account of the (possible) cost of training:

Man for man the European is undoubtedly to be preferred, but it is a question of cost. The whole of the tropical world, apart from White Australia or protected territories such as Honolulu, depends for its prosperity upon cheap labour, and it is essential that Fiji should be in a position to compete...what we have to do is to translate the difference [i.e. relative efficiency] into terms of money. 10

Fletcher's theory was repudiated by the government's own public works department on two grounds: it was a 'false economy' to employ less efficient non-European labour, for – as in the case of lorry drivers – Indians were careless and in need of supervision. In addition, there were distinct advantages to be won from tapping more than one (racial) source of labour. As the Commissioner of Works put it, 'the present system acts as a check in more ways than one and conduces to a greater output than would be possible if only one class of driver were employed.'11 The view evidently claimed some support within the CSR. In 1930, a senior official R.T. Rutledge, advised against the training of Indians as fitters and turners:

I think it is very doubtful whether this would be good policy in Fiji. If we have eventually no people but Indians employed in the factory, we would be in a very awkward position if these people, as they will no doubt, form unions and adopt direct action tactics as in Australia. 12
Yet on the whole, the company appeared to show a growing preference for local substitution. It defended its training of selected half-castes, Fijians and Indians in certain jobs and argued, like Fletcher, that the policy complied with the prevailing practice in 'other black countries' of making more use of coloured labour. The competitive sugar market and the high cost (and scarcity) of Australian and New Zealand tradesmen dictated the steady displacement of Europeans by local labour in a number of trades.13

While he denounced as uneconomical the indiscriminate application of a job colour bar, Fletcher, for his part, did not challenge the racist attitudes which lay behind this. The contradiction would seem to have been more apparent than real: there was nothing to suggest that he advocated more than selective labour substitution, and besides, he supported a system of discriminatory earnings or a wage colour bar where this was done. Ideology did not then hinder economic development because, on the grounds of its (alleged) inefficiency and unreliability, unskilled local labour could be deployed to do the skilled work of Europeans at lower wage rates.

Fletcher's opinions were shared by the Theodore group which thus found a valuable ally in its efforts to defy the de facto reservation - under the 1934 Mining Regulations - of winder engine driving as a European occupation in the early 1930's.14 Writing to Hedstrom in December 1935, Theodore complained that it would be 'an onerous and unnecessary burden if we were compelled to employ only European certificated engine drivers'. Two years later, the mining regulations were amended to enable his companies to modify their own policy of job reservation in respect of this class of work.15
Thenceforth, only drivers on principal winding plant were required to be 'fully certificated'. On all three types of winches (air, diesel and electric motor driven), the government accepted that '...of necessity [drivers had] to be drawn from the ranks of workers of mixed descent, native Fijians, and the like'. Good health, practical experience, comprehension in spoken English and Fijian, and general 'suitability, sobriety and good conduct' became the only requirements. Although the written examination of principal winder drivers did present problems for Rotuman and half-caste trainees, the companies could evade this requirement either by employing men as 'relief drivers' or by using interim permits. Within a year, all certificates of competency for winch driving were awarded to 'Native Fijians' and 'Persons of Mixed Descent'; and by 1940, half-castes had been trained, examined and certified as principal winder engine drivers.

Fletcher's controversial approval of labour substitution gained currency and by 1940 had become more or less accepted as official ideology even broader in scope. As well as half-castes replacing Europeans, there was an increasing tendency to employ Indians and Fijians as artisans in preference to half-castes. The first report of the colony's newly appointed Industrial Relations Officer accounted for this in economic terms almost identical with Fletcher's own argument six years before:

The artisan class was at one time recruited almost exclusively from persons of mixed European-Native descent; but both the Indian and the Fijian, whose standards of living are lower, and many of whom are capable of equal degrees of skill, are in increasing competition with the mixed section of the population...
Although the rationalisation of production costs demanded increasing occupational mobility by non-Europeans in mining as in other industries, the survival and resilience of racialist attitudes testified to the symbiosis of ideology with capital accumulation. As the Fijian workforce became more stabilised and acquired skills, albeit in the absence of formal training, a discriminatory wage structure persisted. The attempt of the administration to introduce trade testing in 1946, aborted under political pressure from the mining and sugar companies, held one of the keys to this anomaly. Without formal recognition of their skills, non-European and in particular Fijian labour could, with impunity, be classified as ordinary labour — as churn drill labour or assistants rather than churn drillers for example. The following sections seek to show this.

What is argued here is that discrimination ultimately assisted the quest for a surplus and exercised a conservative influence on the relations of production in the Fiji mining industry; that, as with South African mining, a theory attesting to the 'dysfunction' of ideology upon economic development does not stand up to empirical scrutiny.
II Collaboration in the labour market

Between 1934 and 1948, the exploitation of Fijian mineworkers took various forms. Principally, it consisted in the stabilisation of their wages at very low levels and the declining real value of these; in their categorisation as unskilled labour despite their deployment in skilled work; in the restrictions imposed on their occupational as well as their wage mobility; and in their exclusion from or token participation in the various occupational benefits which represented the non-cash part of total earnings. In sum, Fijians were the main victims of an elaborate system of job and wage discrimination which evolved in the mining industry from the 1930's.

The first fifteen years of mining witnessed a prolonged and highly successful period of wage control. The surplus of labour during the depression years and until the war imposed severe constraints on the bargaining power of Fijian labour. So too, the migrant and contract basis of employment precluded any form of industrial organisation and militated against change either in the structure of earnings or in the form of wage adjustments within it. Yet these factors do not fully explain why Fijian wages scarcely rose between 1936 and 1948. Faced with wage demands during and after the war and opposition to the discriminatory system of earnings voiced as early as 1938, mining capital enjoyed an impregnable political strength.

For a brief time during 1935, at the zenith of the colony's gold rush, the competition for mine labour enabled Fijians to demand and strike for higher wages and better rations. On the Tavua field, they extracted competitive weekly rates of 16/- for unskilled and 25/- for skilled work from the associated companies. The unskilled
wage was matched by only one other company on the field; the skilled wage was surpassed by one.\(^3\) (see table 4.1.) The display of strength by local mine labour was observed with some alarm within the administration, inciting fears of the damaging effects it might have on wages outside the industry. The District Commissioner Colo North (Reay) went so far as to propose that a central recruiting bureau be set up to standardise wages and ration scales.\(^4\)

But the Fijian advantage in the mine labour market was shortlived; and as the gold rush subsided, it became apparent that drastic measures of the kind Reay advocated would not be necessary. By early 1936, the major mining companies had established a uniform daily rate\(^5\) and within a year, the associated group was no longer forced to compete for labour at least with other mining concerns. Monopsonistic conditions of recruitment as well as the state's cooperation in mobilising mine labour and controlling the terms of indenture, permitted reduction in the basic (Fijian) wage rate to between 12/- (surface) and 15/- (underground) a week. Collusion with other employers of Fijian and half-caste labour – notably the sugar monopoly, the merchant companies and the government itself – over rates of pay and conditions of employment offered additional means of regulating wages. It constructed a sturdy defence against industrial pressures.\(^6\)

The expansion of prospecting and mining activities on the Tavua field during the early 1930's was closely watched by the sugar company. It was, the CSR general manager wrote to his Lautoka mill manager,

...certainly desirable that higher wages should not be paid to labour employed at mining than we are paying to unskilled labour.\(^7\)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Av. No. of Men Employed During 1935</th>
<th>European Hours Worked Per Week</th>
<th>Concessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji Mining Corp. NL</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7. 0. 0.</td>
<td>Concessions: Europeans provided with quarters. Fijians with quarters and rations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Mines of Fiji NL and Fiji Gold NL</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6. 5. 0.</td>
<td>Concessions: Europeans provided with quarters. Fijians and Chinese with quarters and rations. First aid dressings provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Morgan Developments Ltd.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6. 0. 0. 3. 10. 0.</td>
<td>Concessions: Europeans and Indians provided with quarters. Fijians provided with quarters and rations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loloma West Ltd.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>6. 5. 0.</td>
<td>Concessions: Drill superintendent allowed 2 per week boarding allowance. Europeans provided with quarters. Fijians with rations and medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloha Central GMNL</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6. 0. 0.</td>
<td>Concessions: Europeans provided with quarters, lighting and medicine. Fijians and Chinese with quarters, ration and medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Reefs Consolidated NL</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10. 10. 0. 2. 0. 0.</td>
<td>Concessions: Each class is provided with quarters, rations, tobacco, soap and medicines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Av. No. of Men Employed During 1935</td>
<td>European Skilled</td>
<td>Unskilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatukaisia Mining Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5. 0. 0.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd.</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8. 6. 0.</td>
<td>5.17. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavua Gold Developments Ltd.</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>7. 7. 8.</td>
<td>4.11.11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Gold NL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6. 6. 0.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emperor Gold Mining Co. Ltd.</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>6.10. 0.</td>
<td>4. 0. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loloma (Fiji) Gold Mines NL</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6.10. 0.</td>
<td>4. 0. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koroere Gold Mines NL</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6.10. 0.</td>
<td>4. 0. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Kasi Mines Ltd. and Kasi Developments Ltd.</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>5. 0. 0.</td>
<td>3.10. 0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concessions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSO F36/29
For their part, the Theodore companies recognised the economic benefits of cooperation and, to this end, sought details of the CSR's unskilled rates before drawing up their first Fijian schedule in 1936.8

Competition for half-caste artisans around the late 1930's, however, placed informal wage collaboration under some strain. Commenting on the case of a resigning (half-caste) blacksmith, Emperor's chief engineer advised Theodore that

...although [the General Manager] agrees that [the man] is worth more than 14s Od per day, he is unable to make an increase by reason of an agreement amongst employers in Fiji that no half-caste is to receive more than 14s Od per day. 9

The payment of periodic bonuses to a prized worker was one way of circumventing wage restrictions. But the companies also acknowledged that some of the CSR's conditions - particularly its housing facilities and overtime rates - were in fact superior to those offered at the mines; and that these discrepancies were a major reason for the defection of their half-caste workers.10 (see table 4.2.)

In a bid to preserve the low cost structure of Fijian labour, the state played a critical role in manipulating what was in theory a competitive labour market. The rate paid to road labour, for example, was established 'after conferring with the various agricultural interests',11 while in 1936, a motion tabled in the Council of Chiefs urging a higher rate for unskilled Fijian labour, was firmly rejected.12 An increase in the daily wage for road labour could not be granted, Fletcher insisted, for the simple reason that
...it would handicap the Colonial Sugar Refining Co. and other planters, and probably result in the Colony being unable to compete with other tropical countries in the world’s markets. 13

In another respect, official attitudes hammered the commitment to wage control. Following Britain's ratification of the Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention of 1928, the administration succeeded in delaying the passage of supporting colonial legislation. It was not, the CSR noted, a change of heart that lay behind the decision five years later to ratify the convention, but rather the increasing difficulties of withstanding pressure from the Colonial Office. Though there seemed 'little hope that it can again be shelved', the company was placated by the reassuring forecast of the Acting Governor about the actual application of the legislation. The bill was, in his summation, likely to become a 'dead letter' for although it established machinery to enforce a minimum wage, the use of the machinery was at the government's discretion. 15

State intervention in the mine labour market took coercive form in the early years of the war when Fijians were obliged to continue working for wages that were uncompetitive and lower in (real) value. In the interests of the colony and the empire, the government's concern to keep the mines in production showed it willing to provide what was tantamount to 'forced' labour. The effect of this was to annul the market advantage mineworkers had come to acquire; to deny them the 'freedom' to choose where to sell their labour; and to sanction their employment at inordinately cheap rates. (see chapter three) Wage regulation, it was evident, was as much a political convention as it was a function of a mining monopsony. This dual advantage was to make a marked impression on the pattern of mine earnings.
### TABLE 4.2

**CSR WAGES RATES AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT**

**FOR EUROPEAN AND NON-EUROPEAN LABOUR, 1934**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Average Numbers Employed</th>
<th>Average Wage Rates</th>
<th>Average Number of hours of work p.wk excluding overtime</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14/6 p.dy</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>2/- (task)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>or 2/6 (p.dy)</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European*</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>11/6 p.dy</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>2/3 -</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2/8 p.dy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes large proportion of half-castes of various grades, pay ranging from 20/- per day for European tradesmen (+ concessions) to 6/- for half-caste handymen (+ concessions).

**Benefits**

**Europeans:**

- Free lodging (single).
- Low rent houses (married).
- Reduced rate sales of groceries, meat, milk etc.
- Contribution by company to Employees' Benefit Society and Provident Fund providing medical benefits, sick pay, life assurance and pensions.

**Coloured Labour:**

- Free housing, medical attention, medicines of labourer and family, staple foods like rice at cheap fixed rates.

**Source:** Attorney in Fiji to CS, 20.6.34, CSR 142/2561.
The structure of earnings in the mining industry differentiated Fijians from other racial groups. The issue of rations and free housing represented two principal non-cash supplements to their wages; and the practice of the companies was to include the value of these in their overall estimation of Fijian earnings. In spite of the apparent problems this poses for any comparative analysis of earnings, there are sound reasons for rejecting distinctions which masked the various ways in which half-caste and European wages were also supplemented in kind. Single half-castes and Rotumans were accommodated in barracks without charge, while the rentals for married Europeans, half-castes and Rotumans were heavily subsidised. The companies' accounts, moreover, show that Rotumans paid less rent than the value placed on inferior Fijian housing. A large part of the cost of European messing (board and lodging) was also borne by the companies, and 'crib' meals valued at a per capita average of 6d per shift, were issued to all mill and mine shiftworkers except Europeans. Until October 1936, half-castes received free rations.

Quite apart from these anomalies, the mines' own composition of Fijian earnings was not always consistent. The assessment of their overtime, for example, was not, like that for other races, based on total emoluments: that is, it did not include the value of rations and housing. So too, Fijians who chose to return to their villages during their annual (paid) holidays did not receive rations or the equivalent in cash. It was not before December 1949 that the companies agreed, under pressure from the mineworkers' union, to
permit Fijians to collect their rations on return from holiday. Even then, this was conditional upon their doing so within ten days of work resuming. 5

To some extent, the early decision to ration Fijian mine labour was influenced by the isolation of the gold fields from the coastal towns and markets. Theodore insisted that

it would not be possible to keep Fijian labour here in this non-food growing area unless rations are provided by the Company. 6

'Native foodstuffs' - rootcrops like dalo - had to be transported from distant areas like the Wainibuka; but bulk purchase of these as well as other items bought wholesale like sugar from the CSR, and tea, flour etc. from the companies' agent and retail supplier, Morris Hedstrom, enabled this to be done fairly cheaply. As Francis Wilson has suggested in respect of the South African gold mines, providing rations was one way of ensuring that a workforce was 'fit enough' to undertake heavy tasks in physically trying conditions. 7

But the system was important in a number of other ways. It helped to regulate the lives of mine labour - to determine what and when it was to eat; it kept the overall cost of Fijian labour low; and it was used to justify repeated refusals to improve cash incomes on the grounds that most of the increase in living costs was borne by the companies themselves. 8

Rationing was particularly attractive as a cheaper alternative to paying higher wages. It represented only a small proportion of the total cost of Fijian labour. Between March 1938 and March 1939, for example, the cost of 'native' labour for the Emperor mine amounted to £38,124; totalling £9,909, the cost of rations was 25.9% of this.
Taking the total number (651) of Fijians employed at the mine at that time, the average daily and weekly costs of Fijian labour (i.e. including rations) worked out at a little over 3/- and £1 respectively. The inclusion of housing in the structure of Fijian earnings had a similar purpose. As Nilsen explained in 1947, we consider that it is more profitable to provide employees with reasonably comfortable living quarters, than to be constantly faced with increasing wages. 10

Like earnings, occupational benefits such as sick pay, holidays and superannuation were not uniform but conformed to the general pattern of racial differentiation and to low cost Fijian labour in particular. They added weight to the financial burden of supporting an élite component within the workforce. Until the early 1940's, only Europeans were given allowances for time away from work on account of illness - this for one day of each month of service (12 days maximum p.a.) so long as it did not arise out of 'misconduct', 'intoxication' or while a worker was away from the mines. In 1943, sick pay at the rate of half a day per month of service was awarded to half-castes, Indians and Rotumans. Fijians were guaranteed only the continued supply of their rations. 11 By comparison, conditions in the sugar industry looked decidedly generous. Both Indian and Fijian labour already received sick pay (after 3 days sickness) at the rate of 7/6 for married men and 6/- for single men a week. This was paid for two months; for a third month, the allowance was at half rate. 12

The mines' medical benefit fund established in 1935 offered medical insurance only to European and half-caste workers. Both racial groups paid 1/3 per week to the fund and their contributions were subsidised at the rate of £1 for £1 by the companies. Hospital care
for workers and their families was paid for out of the fund; and
the weekly services of a local doctor were provided at the
companies' cost. Complaints from Rotuman workers that they were
classified as Fijians for medical treatment and were thereby
excluded from the fund, were sympathetically considered by the
companies in 1947. Government policy, however, obstructed efforts to
reclassify them as half-castes for this purpose. Perhaps the
single most important factor in relation to the medical care of
Fijian mineworkers was that its cost was borne not by capital but by
the colonial administration and the village economy. (see chapter
five)

Annual leave benefits also varied according to racial grouping.
Until 1936, half-castes received the same leave as Europeans - one
day for each 'completed month of service'. In October that year, a
new employment schedule reduced this to six days and restricted
maximum leave to those employed for at least six months. This
established parity between half-caste and Fijian leave and applied
the same proviso that holiday pay would only be granted to workers
who returned after the Christmas break. By the early 1940's,
Indians, Rotumans and half-castes were entitled to one day a month;
European leave was upgraded to two weeks, and bonus leave - two
weeks after three years' service - introduced. The privilege of a
paid bonus holiday was extended to half-castes in 1946 and raised
along with the European entitlement to three weeks a year. Annual
half-caste leave was simultaneously increased to two weeks while
Fijian holidays remained at the original rate of six days per
annum.
Blatant though this discrimination was, and in spite of a formal protest made on behalf of Fijian workers, Nilsen categorically denied 'any intimation of discrimination between the various sections of our employees'. Unable to draw on the conventional apology for racial grading - i.e. the different levels of skill and living standards of the various racial groups employed - he could reply only that

We do not think the comparison of holidays between our European and Fijian employees a suitable one and consider that if comparisons are to be made in this matter they should be made between holidays to Fijians employed by the Mining Companies and holidays given by all other employers of Fijian labour in the Colony. A flimsy defence, it was enough to put the lid on any lingering sympathy within the administration for the Fijian plaintiffs. 'It is difficult,' the Commissioner of Labour (Reay) observed, 'to criticize what are today better conditions of employment than Govt. gives to its own employees.' His failure to take the matter further gave the group a free rein to continue and to extend the practice in later years. (see chapter seven) Not until 1965 were Fijian leave benefits to be put on an equal footing with those of other racial groups.

Additional costs were incurred through the subsidisation and administration of a superannuation scheme designed to offer death and pension benefits to mineworkers and staff. Until late 1946, European employees enjoyed exclusive protection under the scheme. It was perhaps because of the job mobility of half-castes during the war that the companies deemed it appropriate to extend to them the benefits of the newly entitled staff superannuation and provident scheme from 1947. As with the medical benefit fund, they matched members' contributions to this; and where, in the case of death, the
The stipulated minimum of a full year's salary could not be met from accumulated savings, they paid the balance.\(^{22}\)

The singling out of half-castes as the new beneficiaries presented the awkward task of sifting out one hundred odd Rotumans, Pacific Islanders, Chinese and Indian workers who 'for all general purposes such as pay, housing, holiday allowances etc...are on the same basis as Euronesians'.\(^{23}\) Nilsen complained that 'our biggest difficulty is to be able to define who are half-castes and who are not. We have so many mixtures.'\(^{24}\)

It was the controversial question of Fijian membership, however, which went to the heart of the mines' strategy. In 1946, a 'canvass' of Fijian opinion indicated that between '20-25\% of employees would join the scheme if made available to them'. Theodore privately supported the idea and a number of requests were made by Fijians for membership.\(^{25}\) Nilsen, however, opposed the opening of the scheme to Fijians in advance of their accessibility to 'staff' categories of work - to shift boss status for example. Even then, he had his reservations:

...it might be advisable to promote a couple of Fijians in the mill, a couple in the Power House and a couple in the mine to the status of staff membership, and as such bring them into the Superannuation Scheme. This might have some good effect, although it is difficult to make these fellows understand the difference between staff and ordinary employees. \(^{26}\)

No Fijian was admitted to the scheme until 1961.\(^{27}\)

Lobbying on behalf of Rotuman workers met with more success; and some four years after half-caste participation was approved, the first Rotumans were selected for membership. Mindful of the likely backlash from Fijian workers if this characteristic display of
favouritism became known, particularly when at this time the companies were surreptitiously recruiting more labour from Rotuma, management was 'careful [to] include(s) only names for which special justification could be produced.'
The classification of Fijians as general labour, distinguished primarily by whether they were employed on the surface or underground, was an important device used to keep labour costs to a minimum, for the standardisation of jobs which it implied, concealed considerable employment in work demanding skills and expertise. The service record cards of Fijian mineworkers provide illuminating evidence of this form of deskilling. Ascribed job classifications were diverse but they shared one striking characteristic: with few exceptions (e.g. carpenters and a few other tradesmen), they commanded only the minimum rates that applied to unskilled (surface or underground) labour.

Men classified as underground and surface miners, miner truckers, mine labour, machine hands, diamond and churn drill labour (assistants or helpers), mine timbermen (or helpers), sample boys (or assistants), assay boys (or labour), fitter assistants (or labour), bracemen, electrician labour (or assistants), mill labour, general labour (allocated to different departments), flotation assistants, cooks and waiters alike, were paid 2/- or 2/6 a day until 1943. At least until the late 1950's Fijians were classified as helpers or labour (diamond drill helpers or labour for example) rather than operators (diamond drillers).

The efficiency of Fijians in skilled jobs confirmed the absurdity of their official classification as subordinates. As early as 1937, Theodore informed Melbourne shareholders that
## TABLE 4.3

### DISTRIBUTION OF FIJIANS EMPLOYED AT THE EMPEROR MINE IN JUNE 1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Main Mill</th>
<th>Pilot Plant</th>
<th>Assay Office</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Community Services</th>
<th>Waiters</th>
<th>Mine</th>
<th>Slimes Dam</th>
<th>Surface Gang Mill</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grinding &amp; Cyanidisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unloading stores, clearing drains etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crushing Plant</td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Filters Maintenance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ore Sample Plant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarification &amp; Precipitation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Source

G.L. Ditchburn to Managing Director, 23.6.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1939.
Most of the work, including the operation of the rock drills, air compressor, pumps and winches has been performed by Fijians, from whom very excellent service has been maintained.

Later, with increasing mechanisation, shaft sinking and level development similarly drew on Fijians for skilled work - for tasks including drilling (by handheld jackhammers), blasting, mucking (by mechanical loaders), pumping and timbering as well as mining by driving, cross-cutting and rising in scattered and narrow orebodies. The racial composition of work parties formed for underground stoping and development work in the 1940's indicated that a high proportion of Fijians was used in skilled mine work.

Table 4.4 below identifies the various work places underground in 1942 and the racial distribution of jobs within them. Three shaft sinking crews in 1945 comprised one European supervisor, one half-caste leading hand, one half-caste or Rotuman winder driver, and ten Fijians - eight miners, one trucker and one braceman.

TABLE 4.4
DISTRIBUTION OF UNDERGROUND WORK, 1942

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Natives</th>
<th>Half-castes</th>
<th>European Personnel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stope 250W</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 Mine Supt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stope Rise 250W</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 Technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stripping NE 50E</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stope 220W</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 Foreman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stope 50W</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 shift bosses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stope 100E</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 leading hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stope Drive 280W etc</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>miner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samplers, Storemen,</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timberman &amp; Fitters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumping</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>66*</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 25-30 more Natives requested

**Source:** Mitchell to General Manager memo, 5.8.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944
Where skills or experience were formally acknowledged and classifications resembled or coincided with those of other racial groups, the improbity of a low wage structure was more conspicuous. Of 196 Fijians officially entitled 'underground miners' at Emperor in 1948, 66% received wages between 3/- and 4/- a day (the ceiling being 8/6). This was scarcely more than the minimum rate paid to unskilled underground labour, and in the case of the 33% on 3/-, no higher. Though the wages of certain tradesmen tended to be more generous, the wage colour bar was directed with equal vigour towards such occupations.

Acclaimed performance made no impact on institutionalised discrimination although the inequity of the system was sometimes questioned. An internal memorandum from the chief engineer to Theodore in 1939 on the case of a Fijian fitter offered one critique:

This man is in receipt of 10s 0d per day plus rations. He is the best all round fitter we have on the mines. He speaks English equally as well as Fijian and has full control of his gang. I have actually stood by a job for 24 hours and seen this man working side by side with European fitters in receipt of £1 per day, and in my opinion this man, by his ability to work and his clear idea of the requirement has easily proved himself a 25% better tradesman than those in receipt of 100% more wages. 6

The unbending (wage) colour bar delivered a particularly harsh sentence to another Fijian worker. Accidentally classified as a half-caste in 1939, the man received, for four years, the half-caste wage for his work as a pipe fitter and plate-layer. In 1944, his true racial identity was discovered, whereupon he was promptly reclassified as a 'Fijian' pipe fitter and had his wage rate reduced by over 30% to 5/6 per day. 7
Table 4.5 reveals some of the main characteristics of the wage colour bar applied in the mining industry, showing how in spite of comparable levels of skill, experience or even formal job classifications, the scale of Fijian earnings was noticeably lower than that which applied to half-caste workers. From 1940, an increase in half-caste earnings widened the gap, when, for example, the wage range for miners (from learner to leading hand) was raised to between 7/- and 14/-. Improvements made to the Fijian basic wage in 1943 were offset by a reduction in the starting rates of assistants to carpenters, blacksmiths, electricians, engine and pump attendants, samplers, greasers, and assayers assistants.

As table 4.5 illustrates, jobs performed by Europeans and Fijians rarely shared the same classification, and Europeans, alone, occupied the higher paying positions. There were, however, a few cases of common occupation where a comparison of earnings can easily be drawn. In such instances, the gulf in earnings was visibly greater than that prevailing between Fijians and half-castes.

The tighter restrictions placed on the occupational mobility of Fijians in contrast to half-castes proved an enduring practice, particularly in respect of the more responsible jobs. By 1940, half-castes were eligible for the position of shift boss while the most senior jobs open to a Fijian mineworker until well into the 1950's were boss boy, head boy or leading hand miner. This signalled one crucial way in which Fijians were subject to a greater degree of exploitation: the consolidation of skills increased the efficiency of long-service workers but the barriers to mobility ensured that their labour power was consistently undervalued. The cost benefits to capital of this discrimination were no mystery.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Wage Rate Per Shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Labour</td>
<td>2/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Underground Labour</td>
<td>2/6 (+ 2/- bonus per week for unbroken and satisfactory service)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>Unskilled Workers - helpers &amp; assistants to tradesmen</td>
<td>6/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European (1941)</td>
<td>Beginner - without previous experience</td>
<td>Underground Mine Labourer Learner Miner Learner Miner</td>
<td>2/6 6/- £4/10/- to £5 (p.wk.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>6 months continuous service underground</td>
<td>Miner Learner Miner</td>
<td>3/4 7/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>6 months satisfactory progress in mines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>12 months continuous service underground</td>
<td>Miner Learner Miner</td>
<td>3/10 8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>12 months satisfactory progress in mines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Requirements</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Wage Rate Per Shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>18 months service underground and with special approval of mine manager</td>
<td>Fijian Boss Boy</td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>18 months satisfactory progress</td>
<td>Learner Miner or Miner</td>
<td>9/- 10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Showing special skills, with ability to take charge of various kinds of work in mine</td>
<td>Leading Hand Miner</td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>After one year</td>
<td>Leading Hand Miner</td>
<td>11/- to 12/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>After 1 year leading hand miner</td>
<td>£6 (p.wk.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1940)</td>
<td>1st 6 months service</td>
<td>Winch Drivers and Hoistmen</td>
<td>3/10 4/4 5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>After 6 months service</td>
<td>Winch Driver &amp; Hoistmen</td>
<td>8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Further promotion on special approval of Manager</td>
<td>Engine Driver</td>
<td>9/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>After 2 years</td>
<td>Winder Engine Driver</td>
<td>10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1935)</td>
<td>1st 6 months service</td>
<td>Fitters Assistant</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>After 6 months service</td>
<td>Assistants to fitters, blacksmiths, electricians &amp; other artisans</td>
<td>3/10 4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Further promotion on special approval of Manager</td>
<td>Assistants to mechanics (i.e. pipe fitters, lathe men, plumbers, pipe fitters, electrical assistants)</td>
<td>6/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>Fitters Assistant</td>
<td>7/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1935)</td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>£3 (p.wk.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>Assistant Blacksmith</td>
<td>£5 (p.wk.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Requirements</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td>Wage Rate Per Shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>1st 6 months service</td>
<td>Samplers &amp; Greasers (mill &amp; surface)</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After 6 months service</td>
<td></td>
<td>3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further promotion on special approval of Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Engine Attendants</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pump Attendants</td>
<td>3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-caste</td>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>Samplers &amp; Greasers</td>
<td>6/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>1st 6 months service</td>
<td>Engine Attendants</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After 6 months service</td>
<td>Pump Attendants</td>
<td>3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further promotion on special approval of Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>Engine Attendants</td>
<td>6/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>Pump Attendants</td>
<td>7/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>1st 6 months service</td>
<td>Truck Drivers</td>
<td>3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After 6 months service</td>
<td></td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further promotion on special approval of Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(If special qualifications or experience, can be placed at higher rate subject to Manager's approval.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>Truck Drivers</td>
<td>8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working more than ordinary hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>£3/5/- (p.wk.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5 (contd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Wage Rate Per Shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>1st 6 months service</td>
<td>#Churn Drill Assistant (labour or helper)</td>
<td>2/- to 2/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After 6 months service</td>
<td>Assistant Churn Drill Operator</td>
<td>£4-£6 (p.wk.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further promotion on special approval of Manager</td>
<td>Diamond Drill Head Boy</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diamond Drill Operator</td>
<td>3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£4/10/- to £6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1939)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(p.wk.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£4/10/- to £6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1941)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(p.wk.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# This work category is not listed in 1936 or 1943 Fijian schedules but from the company service record cards it appears as a common occupation.

* These wage rates apply to the period 1936-1943 for Fijians only. For Half-Castes, they apply to the years 1936-1940; and for Europeans to 1936 only unless otherwise specified.

Source: Data compiled from Emperor, Loloma and Koroere Mines & TPP Co Ltd 'Wages, Rates and Conditions of Employment for Fijians and Half-Caste Employees, Oct 1936', CSO F10/6 Pt 6; Emperor Gold Mining Co. Ltd Rates of Pay Allowances and Conditions - European Employees - Wages Staff only, 1936, CSO F36/29; Vat/Confidential to 1940; Vat/General Correspondence August-December 1939; Vat/Loloma Mine Employees, Insurance etc; Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; Service Record Cards of Fijian and Half-Caste Employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.
although the system was draped in the respectable cloak of conventional prejudice. As the mine superintendent surmised in 1948,

By careful selection and training many have become skilful and reliable but Fijians have not yet been able to accept responsibility in the mines greater than that of leading hand. 10

The history of a miner from Kadavu provided a fairly typical example of this form of cost control. Sixteen years of experience as an underground miner, broken only by a three month period of illness, saw him promoted only to the position of leading hand. This commanded less than 50% of the European rate that had applied in 1936 for the equivalent position:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1936</td>
<td>Engaged at basic rate of 2/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1940</td>
<td>Rate increased to 3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-Oct 1940</td>
<td>Discharged due to illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1940</td>
<td>Re-engaged at 3/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>LH miner on 8/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mobility of Fijian wages were subject to similarly stringent control. Except for select tradesmen, truckdrivers and engine drivers who were eligible for higher rates, the schedules applied to all underground and surface Fijian workers until the mid 1940's fixed a ceiling of 5/- per shift. 12 In contrast, the 1936 schedules for half-castes and Europeans stipulated ceilings of 14/- per day and £7 per week respectively. The maximum Fijian wage thus corresponded to the minimum half-caste wage. 13 Comparative (wage) scales were themselves a measure of the constraints on Fijian earnings: a range of 9/- per day applied to half-castes, £3 per week to Europeans, but only 3/- per day to Fijians. The implications of this discrepancy are shown very clearly in the case of a Fijian carpenter employed in 1936. Over twelve years of continuous
employment (Dec 1936 to Jan 1949), his daily wage was raised only from 7/- to 9/-.

By the late 1940's, the ceiling on Fijian wages had been raised by over 100% to 12/- per shift, but only a handful of workers benefitted from this. From Table 4.6 below, it is possible to get an idea of the distribution of Fijian rates around this time, and particularly of how, for the vast majority of workers, actual wages fell far short of the prescribed maximum. Of 955 Fijians employed in December 1947, 49% received between 2/6 and 3/6 and as many as 89.6% were paid between 2/6 and 5/-.

TABLE 4.6
DISTRIBUTION OF WAGES AND TOTAL EARNINGS
FOR FIJIAN MINE LABOUR, 1947
(shillings and pence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Basic Rate Per Day</th>
<th>Cost of Living Bonus</th>
<th>Rations</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Total Emoluments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>7/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293</td>
<td>3/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>7/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>4/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>8/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>9/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>5/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>9/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>6/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>10/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>6/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>11/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>7/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>11/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>12/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>12/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/4</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>12/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/6</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>13/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>13/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>14/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12/-</td>
<td>1/-</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>16/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>955</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Av. Rate 3/9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vat/Associated Companies Vatukoula Rates of Pay and Emoluments for Fijian Employees as at Dec 17th, 1947.
The practice of transferring workers between different departments, and thereby breaking the continuity of employment in particular jobs, was one obstacle to wage increases. Transfers were frequently authorised for Fijians and undoubtedly reduced their capacity to acquire skills in any one type of work. For those moved from underground to the surface, transfers also meant a lower rate of pay. Yet an irregularity in the Fijian wage structure offers a more compelling explanation for why so many men were engaged at the same rate or received negligible increases over several years: the criteria governing their wage adjustments took little account of experience.

Under the 1936 and 1943 schedules, Fijians, like Europeans and half-castes, had increases approved (in theory) as their period of service lengthened. Only in the case of Fijians, however, was priority attached to supporting evidence of an increase in 'knowledge and skill' and proof of 'satisfactory and continuous' service. In 1936, Theodore emphatically rejected a request from Fijian mineworkers that a wage rise be automatically granted after six months' service. And echoing his sentiments, a meeting of departmental managers ten years later reiterated that evidence of 'increased skill and capacity for work' was a precondition of wage adjustments. In the absence of trade testing, rulings on improvements in skill, knowledge or ability were thus entirely at the discretion (or whim) of management. And for those assigned to 'ordinary surface work', the prospect of incomes rising above the basic rate was even more remote: there were no wage guidelines (based on length of service) laid down at all.
Managerial discretion proved less obstructive to European and half-caste mineworkers and the improvements made to their wages and salaries were, by comparison, steady and systematic. Ironically, Theodore reasoned that it was the experience accumulated by European supervisors which justified annual increases:

the responsibility of the position and the value of the man occupying it may continue to increase year by year, and to retain such men we must recognise their enhanced value. 18

But the companies were acutely aware of the scarcity value of these two sources of mine labour particularly during the war years; and they were, for this reason, more sensitive to the compounding effect of rising living costs on dwindling labour reserves. Early in 1940, Theodore urged a wage increase in order 'to allay any growing unrest arising from the wages schedules now in force', and to postpone having to concede overtime at penalty rates. A 10% increase was granted to all but Fijian mineworkers and a 5% bonus paid to executive and salaried staff to meet the increased cost of living. 19 At least three other adjustments were made to European staff salaries before 1947. 20 For half-caste and European workers, cost of living allowances rose from 10% to 20% (to a maximum of £1/10/- per week) in 1943 and again to 30% (to a maximum of £2 per week) in 1947. 21 Little, on the other hand, was done to maintain the value of Fijian wages before 1950.

By the end of 1939, the price of food and groceries alone had risen by 17% over pre-war levels. Four months later, the official index of commodity prices confirmed that Indian and European costs of living had risen by 15.5% and 21.75% respectively. 22 As the war progressed, costs surged to more alarming levels: by January 1944, the percentage increase for Indian workers on Viti Levu (excluding
the capital) had peaked at 115 over August 1939. As Table 4.7 shows, the trend continued through the late 1940's, abating only between 1945 and 1946. By October 1950, the (Indian) cost of living had risen by as much as 143% over 1939.

Yet, until December 1943, Fijian mineworkers received no compensation for the steady erosion of their purchasing power. In defence, the associated group argued that the structure of Fijian earnings - notably their receipt of rations - did not warrant the concessions granted to other races. But even taking account of the rations they received, Fijians were still severely handicapped by rising living costs; and the companies' insistence that they alone paid the penalty for these simply could not be validated. Rations had to be supplemented especially in the case of married workers with families, and increases in the cost of clothing (including protective clothing such as boots), school fees and other items had also to be met out of wages.

The group's failure to make any adjustment to the Fijian schedule between 1936 and 1943 resulted in an absolute decline in wages; it widened the gap between the earnings of Fijians and other races; and it served to intensify Fijian exploitation. The dependance of labour, moreover, increased as deductions eroded actual cash earnings. As Table 4.8 shows, deductions for tobacco purchases, taxes and rations were standardised in the early stages of mining. By the late 1930's, compulsory levies in aid of education and sporting activities had also been introduced. The group's participation in special fund-raising ventures like the government's Malta Appeal of 1942 brought further hardship to low income earners since donations tended to be compulsory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Index Number</th>
<th>Percentage Increase Over 1939</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st August 1939</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan 1944</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st April 1944</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st July 1944</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1944</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan 1945</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st April 1945</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st July 1945</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1945</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan 1946</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st April 1946</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st July 1946</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1946</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan 1947</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st April 1947</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>111</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st July 1947</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>107</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1947</td>
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<td>121</td>
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<td>1st Jan 1948</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>129</td>
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<td>1st April 1948</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st July 1948</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1948</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan 1949</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
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<td>1st April 1949</td>
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<td>139</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st July 1949</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1949</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Jan 1950</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st April 1950</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st July 1950</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Oct 1950</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated and compiled from Table 7, Commissioner of Labour Annual Report, 1950, CP No 34, 1951.
TABLE 4.8

COMPARISON BETWEEN GROSS AND NET EARNINGS

EMPEROR GOLD MINING COMPANY, LTD.
TAVUA - FIJI

NATIVE PAY ENVELOPE

Period from 15 Apr 1937 to 12 May 1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tomasi</th>
<th>Number 654</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Wages (Ai Sau) -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24 shifts @ 2/-</td>
<td>2.8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT (Veisau)</td>
<td>2.8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus 4 Weeks @ 2/-</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Bonisi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Wages</td>
<td>3.9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Levu Ni Sau)

Deductions - (A Dinau)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes Lau</td>
<td>2.11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Deductions</td>
<td>2.15.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net Cash (Kemu i Sau) £ 14.3

Source: SNA N44/15/8
Given the likelihood that uncompetitive wages would exacerbate the industry's labour crisis, the companies' decision to resist pressure to increase the basic Fijian wage was a calculated gamble made possible by colonial war policy. The close links forged with senior members of the administration – notably Theodore's relationship with Governors Sir Harry Luke and Sir Philip Mitchell – certainly helped to keep them informed and in favour.27

Faced with the diminishing capacity of Fijians to meet the massive labour demands of the war, copra, dairy and gold industries, their defence against wage increases did, however, weaken. They were, in addition, subject to some gentle official prodding to approve concessions sufficient to regain the value of the pre-war Fijian wage and to bridge the gulf with other industrial earnings. Compulsion, the Industrial Relations Officer declared, was a poor substitute for economic incentive, and the payment of better wages was the only viable way of drawing efficient labour away from other occupations.28

With great reluctance, the companies approved their first increase in the Fijian wage in April 1943, bringing the basic surface rate up from 2/- to 2/6 and the underground rate from 2/6 to 3/-. A further 6d wage rise was approved in 1944 and two cost of living bonuses aggregating 1/- were granted by 1950. The latter were modest beside those given to half-castes and Europeans (totalling 10/- per day).

Yet other devices were introduced which strengthened company control and cemented the system of exploitation. It was the practice to withhold payment of wages due before the three annual holidays of Christmas, Easter and the Vatukoula Sports Day in August. In this
way, men were paid for up to four weeks' completed work only if they returned to the mines after the holidays were over.29 As alluded to above, annual holiday pay was similarly withheld until the first pay day after the Christmas break.30

The companies also inflicted a penalty of 2/- on workers coming back to the mines after 'unauthorised absence'. Married men with dependants were hardest hit by this for, unlike single men housed in barracks, they could not rely on cooked rations as a means of relief, but had to meet the cost of firewood (for cooking) out of wages. The efforts of the Fijian Committee to persuade the companies to deduct only the cost of rations were not, however, well received. Indeed, they were countered by the threat that wage deductions for the offence were likely to increase. Management was true to its word. In 1948, the penalty was raised to 3/-;31 and from 1944, men who had overstayed their leave or left the mines for unacceptable reasons were, in addition, re-engaged at a lower rate. A minimum of 6d a shift was docked from Fijians and 1/- from half-castes, while penalties for European offenders were prescribed at the discretion of management.32

The zeal with which the policy was applied to Fijian mineworkers was evident in the frequency and duration of wage reductions. And what this meant, of course, was that as skills and efficiency increased, wage rates could, paradoxically, decrease over time. An experienced mine trucker on 3/6 in 1944, for example, had his wage cut twice to 2/6 following two short spells of 'unauthorised absence'. By the end of 1945, his rate had climbed back to 3/- only to be reduced again to 2/6 early the following year.33
Another way of penalising Fijians for absenteeism—which had the effect of reducing their wages—was to downgrade their classifications on their return to work. An official enquiry into an underground accident in 1967 indicated that the policy was still being applied by this late date: an underground (Fijian) miner with four years experience and appointed acting leading hand was dismissed on account of three days' absence without leave; he was reinstated as an unskilled learner on the minimum daily rate.

The shortage of data on aggregate labour costs unfortunately makes it impossible to monitor the changing racial proportions of the wages and salaries bill while taking account of fluctuations in the (racial) composition of the workforce. A breakdown of the Emperor mine's labour cost structure for one year—March 1940 to March 1941—can, however, be offered. (see table 4.9) This reveals the grossly disproportionate amount of total wages and salaries paid to Fijian workers. In turn, it indicates the extent to which the intensive exploitation of Fijians contributed to overall minimisation of labour costs.

Table 4.10 shows that the period between 1938 and 1948 witnessed a 109.8% increase in labour costs from £121,610 to £255,221; and that labour received a rising proportion of the gross value of production during the late 1940's. Over the total period, its share increased from 18.1% to 28.2%. However, given the pattern of wage mobility during the 1940's and the minimal change effected to the racial distribution of labour, it is highly probable that the increase in real unit labour costs would have largely resulted from adjustments made to European (and to a lesser extent half-caste) wages. Between 1938 and 1948, the basic wage for European operators increased by at
### TABLE 4.9

DISTRIBUTION OF WAGES & SALARIES BILL, MAR 1940 - MAR 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Numbers employed</th>
<th>% of total work force</th>
<th>Wages &amp; salaries received £</th>
<th>% of total wages &amp; salaries bill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>38,205</td>
<td>32.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-European*</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>21.15</td>
<td>30,530</td>
<td>25.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>70.53</td>
<td>49,862</td>
<td>42.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,215</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (99.9)</strong></td>
<td><strong>118,599</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (99.9)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Predominantly half-castes but would include Rotumans, Indians and others.

Source: Figures compiled from Queensland Insurance Co Ltd Statement of Wages Mar 1940 - Mar 1941 EGM Co Ltd, Vat/Loloma Mine employees Insurance etc.

### TABLE 4.10

WAGES AND SALARIES AS A PROPORTION OF REVENUE 1938-1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value of Gold &amp; Silver Production for Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin Mines £(F)</th>
<th>Total Salaries &amp; Wages Paid by Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin companies £(F)</th>
<th>Real Unit Labour Costs as a % of the value of production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>669,451</td>
<td>121,610</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>869,217</td>
<td>140,241</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>970,646</td>
<td>167,300</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1,054,585</td>
<td>161,847</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>771,288</td>
<td>115,899</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>556,734</td>
<td>107,284</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>391,342</td>
<td>120,634</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>911,918</td>
<td>138,163</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>784,113</td>
<td>166,036</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>910,283</td>
<td>220,165</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>904,931</td>
<td>255,221</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled and calculated from Vat/Statistics Relating to Activities of the Associated Companies - Vatukoula from January 1935 - December 1964.
least £3 a week or 10/- a shift while the basic Fijian rate rose by 6d a shift (both excluding cost of living allowances). Over the same period, the ratio of European to Fijian employees scarcely changed from 1:10.5 to 1:9.8.\textsuperscript{35} For the year March 1940 to March 1941 at least, it can be calculated that Fijian mineworkers (representing over 70% of the workforce) received less than 7% of the value of production.\textsuperscript{36}

The total wages and salaries bill for all three companies declined between 1941 and 1945 on account of the shrinking size of the workforce. More important, the threat labour shortages posed to wartime production led to heightened exploitation of those workers who remained at the mines. In essence, the falling aggregate return to mine labour in the form of wages and salaries (from £161,847 p.a. to £138,153 p.a.) coincided with a noticeable rise in labour productivity or per capita output (from 126.6 tons p.a. to 154.2 tons p.a.). This is illustrated in Table 4.11.
### TABLE 4.11

**COMPARATIVE TRENDS IN WAGES/SALARIES AND LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY 1938-1948**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tonnage of ore treated on Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin mines</th>
<th>Average number employed on Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin mines</th>
<th>Per capita Output (tons p.a.)</th>
<th>Wages &amp; Salaries Bill for Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin mines (£F)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>195,497</td>
<td>1,390</td>
<td>140.6</td>
<td>121,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>204,719</td>
<td>1,554</td>
<td>131.7</td>
<td>140,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>190,970</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>116.0</td>
<td>167,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>190,729</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>126.6</td>
<td>161,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>145,887</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>151.8</td>
<td>115,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>157,179</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>196.2</td>
<td>107,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>158,775</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>177.7</td>
<td>120,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>158,923</td>
<td>1,030</td>
<td>154.2</td>
<td>138,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>173,246</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>139.2</td>
<td>166,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>159,285</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>220,165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>170,426</td>
<td>1,383</td>
<td>123.2</td>
<td>255,221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Compiled and calculated from Vat/Statistics Relating to Activities of the Associated Companies - Vatukoula from January 1935 to December 1964.
The price of competing in the Australian labour market for skilled miners, technicians and supervisors, was a high one from the very beginning of goldmining. And this, together with the attendant shortage of Europeans, were critical determinants of the early changes made to the mines' occupational structure. One effect of the war was to claim even those skilled men already employed at Vatukoula. After 1945, the situation deteriorated further, the companies repeatedly complaining of the acute shortages of European tradesmen (fitters and turners), churn drillers and other skilled workers, and mill and mine shift bosses.

But the aptitude, behaviour and political consciousness of Europeans were also factors which led the group to review its employment policy as early as 1935. European recruits were often poor workers, inexperienced - one did not know how to charge a hole, Theodore scoffed in 1935 - heavy drinkers or 'grumblers'. Nilsen's private correspondence with Theodore during the latter's wartime absence from the colony revealed his growing distaste for Australian workers, some of whom were agitators 'for the formation of Unions even for the Fijians'.

Early manifestations of European insubordination had drawn attention to the stark contrast between low paid and unorganised Fijian mineworkers and Europeans drawn from a comparatively indulgent market and well rehearsed in the art of industrial bargaining. In October 1935, Europeans employed at Emperor and Loloma delivered a petition demanding higher wages, a 44 hour week, overtime and other
### TABLE 4.12

**WEEKLY WAGE RATES AT THE GREAT BOULDER PROP. GOLD MINES LTD, AUSTRALIA IN 1948**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Classification</th>
<th>Wage Rate Per Week* (£ s d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timbermen - shaft</td>
<td>8. 6. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- general</td>
<td>8. 1. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond Drillers</td>
<td>8. 2. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoist Drivers</td>
<td>8. 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Loader Drivers</td>
<td>8. 0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine Miners</td>
<td>7.19. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Locodrivers</td>
<td>7.18. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platmen, Bracemen &amp; Skipmen</td>
<td>7.15. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truckers and Labourers</td>
<td>7. 9. 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: Rates paid for 5 day week compared to 5½ day week at Vatukoula

Source: Schedule of Information for Mr E.G. Theodore, 24.6.48, Vat/.
penalty rates. Four years later, a number of defecting European workers intercepted by the police, complained of unsafe and unhealthy underground conditions. 5

Disenchant ed with the shortcomings of those of similar racial stock, Nilsen was not unduly alarmed by their truculence:

...when they start thinking they can run this show they are making a big mistake and can easily be sent back to Australia, where they are probably not so hot.

A few of the local Europeans have been blowing off a bit of steam too lately. I know what we will do with them and told them so. 6

Industrial troubles in Australia after the war were observed with greater anxiety. The possibility that these might upset local labour conditions was very real and, for Nilsen, pointed to only one solution:

Conditions in Australia in recent years have given the workers a tendency and complex to be always 'agin the company' and we do not want this kind of agitation to exist amongst our peaceful Euronesian and native employees. Therefore I feel that the less Australian workers we have, the better. Possibly a few more New Zealanders would be a better policy. 7

In 1948, agitation amongst local (European) shift bosses for a 40 hour week brought the threat of upheaval even closer to home. 8

The local labour market offered half-castes as suitable and cheaper substitutes. Like Fijian agriculturalists and plantation labourers, they had been hit by depressed copra prices during the 1930's. By the latter part of the decade, the misfortunes of the industry had driven hundreds of them on to the labour market. The group's early experiments in training them as miners, mill labour (rivetters and rivetters assistants), carpenters, engine attendants, and mechanics, had showed them to be 'steady, good workers and intelligent'. 9

Theodore had been optimistic that
By picking the best of these...we can get together a good underground staff which in the long run will be better than the European miners. 10

If the experiment proves satisfactory, the number will be increased and no further importation of European miners will be made except to keep up a small force of leading hands and shift bosses. 11

Within a few years, management had resolved to train many more half-castes with a view 'to keep[ing] the number of Europeans down to a minimum'; by the 1940's it was decided that they should be groomed for the 'key positions'.12

Labour substitution proved extremely economical bringing savings of around 60% per worker. European miners received between £5 and £6 a week and a half-caste learner miner trucker 7/- a shift or about £2 a week. Even the maximum wage of 12/- a shift or £3/12/- per week payable until 1940 to a class one half-caste miner, represented a large saving over the lowest weekly wage of his European counterpart. The annual cost of 33 half-caste miners employed on the Emperor mine in 1940 totalled £5,196/10/-. This meant that the average return to each miner was 10/- a day, or just under half that of a European miner.13 The cost of labour was cut even more drastically by the replacement of European by half-caste winder engine drivers.14

More important, income differentials remained even as half-castes became more experienced, and wage data demonstrates that these increased considerably during the 1940's. In 1940, the average differential between half-caste and European miners was about 9/- a day. By 1948, this had nearly doubled.15 A further disadvantage of retaining large numbers of European workers during the war was the cost of subsidising their wages (up to 50%) once they were recruited...
into the army. The same concession was available to half-castes (though not to Fijians) but because of the discrepancy in wage rates, this incurred a smaller liability.\textsuperscript{16}

The success of Theodore's 'experiment' with local substitution was evident in correspondence to the companies' head office; the early use of half-castes as leading hand miners and then shift bosses; and in the group's reluctance to re-engage Europeans after the war in some of the jobs allocated to half-castes during their absence.\textsuperscript{17}

The substitution of half-caste for European shift bosses reduced the per capita cost of a fairly senior supervisor from £14 to £8/5/- per week by 1951.\textsuperscript{18} But such manoeuvres were more than a drive for economy and their success could also be measured in social terms. Above all, the changes were important for the friction and polarisation they promoted amongst the half-caste, Rotuman and Fijian groups comprising the workforce.

From the earliest years of the industry, the racial demarcation of jobs and wages militated against a working class alliance. And faced with the rumblings of unionism amongst Fijian mineworkers in the post-war period, the group could perceive that the consolidation of half-caste (and Rotuman) status and earnings offered a decoy that would align the interests of these two racial groups more closely with capital. As one company official remarked later, the appointment of half-castes and Rotumans as shift bosses drew them into the 'managerial structure of the Company':

\begin{quote}
They therefore would not and could not be expected to have divided loyalties between Union and Company. They were Company men. Because of this the Company had the unassailable right to promote or discipline them without any redress to the Union. \textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}
The strategy was, then, to prove as much an inspired instrument of labour control as it was an appropriate formula for reducing labour costs. Its impact on the pattern of industrial relations (and conflict) and on the development of the mineworkers' union in particular, was to be dramatic. (see chapter six)

Despite what appeared to be significant occupational changes, the principles of labour division by race were not in fact compromised. The structure of mine earnings remained unchanged. The intransigence of racialist attitudes provided the driving ideological force behind continuing restrictions on the mobility of non-Europeans. It cemented the discriminatory system of wages. In a private letter to Theodore in 1947, Nilsen reflected:

If the native is prepared to work in proportion to what he eats he can do a lot more work and we will pay him more money, or if he works half as hard as he plays we could operate this mine with half the number of men we are employing today. Whatever way you look at it it is most essential that we have experienced and trained supervision in all departments. 20

Nilsen's crude paternalism articulated a stubborn belief that Fijian mineworkers were destined to be subordinate in the workplace. In the case of half-castes, he lamented, the main 'drawback' was that '[they] continue(s) to marry back into the native race and the children are more native than Euronesian.' 21 Although succeeded as general manager by men less brazen and perhaps less outspoken, Nilsen's racial bigotry typified the attitude of the mines' management. It was to enjoy currency and so to legitimise the continuing structure of occupational and wage discrimination, years later.
Section I

1. In 1938, mining on Emperor was confined mainly to open-cut methods to extract oxidised ore. By 1946, equal amounts of Emperor ore were extracted by open-cut and underground mining. See Mining Board Annual Report for 1938, CP No 11, 1939 and Mines Department Annual Report for 1946, CP 4, 1948.


4. In South Africa, the Mines & Works Amendment Act of 1926 excluded Indians and Africans from certain jobs such as engine driving, blasting and a range of supervisory positions. See Wilson, op. cit. p 11. Mining capital in New Guinea, it appears, was also subject to pressure from organised white labour to maintain a system of job reservation. See Newbury, Colin 'Colour Bar and Labour Conflict on the New Guinea Goldfields 1935-41' in Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol 21, No 3, Dec 1975, pp 30-32.
5. The civilised labour policy introduced by the Pact Government (1924 - 1933) in the mid-twenties was designed to ensure that the class of workers described above [i.e. white unskilled workers] is not denied entry into unskilled occupations by reason of the fact that the lower standard of living to which the Native is accustomed has hitherto kept the rates of pay and their conditions of employment for work of this nature at a level which will not enable such workers to live in accordance with the standard generally observed by civilised persons.' Letter from Secretary for Labour & Social Welfare to the Advisor of the Institute of Race Relations, 14.11.35, Race Relations Journal II, 1935, quoted in Francis Wilson op. cit. p 11.

6. Mitchell, D.T. Mine Superintendent to General Manager Confidential, 20.7.48, Vat/. Mitchell noted of Rotumans that 'very few who have been with us any length of time, remain as labourers, truckers, or as similar unskilled workers.'

7. ibid

8. IOM to Chairman Mining Board, 31.12.35, CSO F111/25. The IOM argued that these alleged deficiencies advised against the use of non-Europeans as winder engine drivers at Vatukoula.

9. ibid

10. Fletcher memo, 2.10.34, and Fletcher to CS, 11.8.34, CSO F36/14.


12. Rutledge to General Manager Sydney, 15.7.30, CSR 142/2900.

13. Ernest S. Smith (Inspector) to Manager Rarawai Mill, 2.4.40; Ernest S. Smith (Inspector) to Manager, Labasa Mill, 23.5.40; Inspector to Manager, Nausori Mill, 31.5.40, CSR 142/2905. Also see Attorney in Fiji to CS, 12.1.34, CSR 142/2561 Colonial Secretary, Fiji 16.6.32-27.9.39 vol 8.

14. The reservation of winder engine driving for Europeans was not specified but implied by the regulations and it was conventional practice. Drivers were required to hold a certificate of competency based on both practical and theory tests ministered by an examining board appointed by the Governor. It was unlikely that a non-European would be approved as a candidate because Grieve, as the Inspector of Mines, had a position of influence on the board and candidates had to sit a written test in English. Mining Regulations 1934 clauses 119, 120; IOM (Grieve) to Chairman Mining Board, 7.12.35, CSO F111/25.


17. Vat/Government Correspondence 1942-Mar 1944.


19. Annual Report of Industrial Relations Officer for 1940, CP No 17, 1941.

20. In dropping the idea of trade testing, the government was, according to the CSR, 'largely influenced' by the views of the company's General Manager and Nilsen. General Manager to Chief General Manager Nausori, 25.1.47, CSR 142/1119.
Section II

1. The Fijian basic rate rose by only 6d over this period in addition to the concession of a 1/- cost of living bonus. (Surface rate 2/- to 2/6 and underground rate 2/6 to 3/-)

2. In April 1942, a group of Fijian mineworkers made a vain attempt to secure a minimum wage of 5/- per day. Nilsen to Theodore, 20.4.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEU July 1941–Nov 1944. See chapter six for other collective wage demands and for account of the 1938 strike.

3. Pacific Gold NL on the Tavua field paid 30/- a week for skilled Fijian labour.

4. DC Colo North to CS, 3.8.35, CSO F36/16.

5. ibid DC Colo North to CS minute, 15.2.36.

6. E.S. Smith (Inspector) to N.E. Nilsen, 19.8.43, CSR 142/2906; Chief Engineer EGM to Mr Turley c/- M.H. Personal, 16.9.40, Vat/Confidential to 1940. See chapter three for further details.

7. General Manager to Manager Lautoka Mill Private Out, 30.5.33, CSR 142/1092.

8. ibid General Manager to Manager Lautoka Mill Private, 30.5.33.


10. In 1936, Theodore rejected a proposal from the Acting Director Public Works Department (A.A. Ragg) that overtime for mineworkers be paid at penalty rates. (i.e. $1 \times$ for ordinary overtime and $2 \times$ for Sundays). The CSR began to pay overtime to its European and Euronesian artisans in 1939. The government was also doing this by then at the rate of $1 \frac{1}{2} \times$ (ordinary) and $2 \times$ (Sundays). See Acting Director Public Works Department to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 13.8.36, and Acting Director Public Works Department to CS, 19.8.36, CSO F36/16; and Nilsen, General Manager to Managing Director memo, 4.12.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1939.

11. Acting Director Public Works Department to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 14.9.36, SNA N50/22/15.

12. Council of Chiefs 1936 Motion by E. Seruvakula (Colo East) 'That the wages of labourers be increased. They are at present given 2/3 per day without food.' Another motion was lodged at the 1942 Council of Chiefs to ensure that wages accommodated the increase in the cost of living. (CP No 11, 1942, Resolution 14)

13. Acting Director Public Works Department to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 14.9.36, SNA N50/22/15.

15. Lord to General Manager Sydney Private, 9.5.33, CSR 142/2902. See CSO MP 5395/29 regarding earlier government resistance to minimum wage legislation. The CSR was not unjustifiably optimistic that the ordinance would prove to be a 'dead letter'. Ten years after its enactment, it had not been implemented once. Reay (C/L) argued that, with the exception of the stevedoring industry, conditions had not required 'unsolicited intervention by Government'. See C.A.
Section III

1. Rotumans paid 4/- a week in rent in 1945 while Fijians received housing valued at 1/- a shift or 6/- a week as part of their earnings. EGM Co Ltd House Occupants and Rentals, 1.11.45, Vat/.

2. In 1963, the gross cost of the European mess totalled £7,106/10/9 (or £9/7/- per man per week) only £3,496/5/9 (or £4/12/- per man per week) of which was recovered in board and lodging payments. This meant that each man was subsidised at the rate of nearly £5 per week. See Cost & Revenue Statement European mess year ending 12.6.63, Vat/Items given to N.E. Nilsen during visits.


4. Chief General Manager memo, 12.10.49, Vat/.

5. Cayzer to Secretary FMWU, 2.12.49, Vat/.


8. Wilson and others have raised the interesting argument of 'dependency' in relation to rationed labour: that is, there is less money saved and therefore prolonged employment. A comparison of South African mine labour in the diamond industry (not rationed) and gold industry (rationed) showed that 36% of African earnings were sent home in the first case as opposed to 18% in the second. Sewel, E.J.B. Native Labour and Payment on Premier Diamond Mine, Papers and Discussions of the Association of Mine Managers of South Africa (TCM Johannesburg, 1960-1961) pp 84 ff cited in Wilson op. cit. p 57.

9. Vat/General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1941.


11. Half-caste sick pay was raised to 12 days p.a. in 1946. See Notice: Sick Allowances for Europeans, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1936-July 1937; Nilsen General Manager Emperor & Loloma to E.S. Smith, CSR Inspector for Fiji, 16.8.43, Vat/Emperor Mine Employees, Engagements, Rents etc; and Vat/Associated Mining Companies Labour Rates of Pay & Conditions Dec 1946 - Euronesians. In respect of Fijians, a maximum period of one month was guaranteed for the continued issue of rations (thereafter discretionary) and workers injured off the field had the cost of rations supplied to them during their absence from work, debited from their pay. See Nilsen to Secretary, W.J. Mayger, and All Department Managers and Timekeeper, 24.3.49, Vat/.


14. Assistant Secretary Vatukoula Medical Benefit Fund to group of seven Rotumans, 13.11.47, Vat/.


16. Nilsen General Manager Emperor & Loloma to E.S. Smith, CSR Inspector for Fiji, 16.8.43; and Nilsen General Manager to Secretary, EGM Melbourne, 10.3.42, in Vat/Emperor Mine Employees, Engagements, Rents etc.

17. Theodore Managing Director to Nilsen, 5.2.46, Vat/; Vat/Associated Mining Companies Labour Rates and Conditions Dec 1946 - Euronesians.

18. Ni Viti Cauravou (The Young Fijian Society) complained to the government on behalf of the Vatukoula Fijian workers. Chairman, Conjoint Branches - Colo & Matanagata - of the Young Fijian Society (Ni Viti Cauravou), 6.7.43, SNA N44/1/49. The society is discussed in more detail in chapter six.

19. N.E. Nilsen General Manager to Reay, C/L, 9.9.43, SNA N44/1/149.

20. ibid Reay C/L to Adviser on Native Affairs minute, 14.9.43.


22. Notice Staff Superannuation and Provident Scheme, Feb 1947, Vat/.

23. Secretary EGM (W.J. Mayger) to Local Secretary EGM Melbourne, 7.2.47, Vat/Superannuation and Provident Scheme.

24. Nilsen to Theodore (Sydney), 14.4.46, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

25. Secretary EGM to Local Secretary EGM Melbourne, 25.1.47, Vat/Superannuation & Provident Scheme; ibid Managing Director Theodore to L.B. Tomlins Local Secretary EGM Melbourne, 7.11.46; ibid Cayzer General Manager to Chief General Manager, 29.8.51.

26. Nilsen Chief General Manager to Cayzer General Manager, 20.11.61, Vat/. The constitution and rules of the Staff Superannuation and Provident Scheme were revised in Jan 1960 and the scheme was divided into the Vatukoula (Fiji) Companies Staff Superannuation Fund and the Vatukoula (Fiji) Companies Staff Provident Fund. The former continued to be funded out of member/company contributions and the latter's expenses were met out of the Superannuation Fund, donations, investment returns, and realisation of the fund itself etc.
27. C.W. Cayzer General Manager to Chief General Manager Melbourne, 8.12.61, Vat/.

28. Cayzer General Manager to Chief General Manager, 29.8.51, Vat/Superannuation and Provident Scheme. The pay range of those Rotumans admitted was 14/6-17/6 per day.
Section IV

1. These work categories are all taken from the individual service record cards of Fijian employees of the Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.


3. Mitchell, D.T. A General Description of Mining Operations at Vatukoula Fiji, Australian Institute of Mining & Metallurgy Proceedings No 168-169, 1953. It is not clear how early non-Europeans were permitted to handle explosives. An underground recruit would be given 'familiarisation' jobs for the first few months, then trained as a miner under the direction of a leading hand miner and supervision of a shift boss. By the 1960's, it was considered that the average length of time taken to reach proficiency (and therefore to be given the responsibility of blasting) was about two years. General Manager EGM to IOM, 2.6.67, MR/Bunch 20, M541/1 Pt 3.


5. Return of Employees Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula, August 1948.

6. Potter, Chief Engineer to Managing Director, 19.6.39, Vat/.

7. Service record cards of Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.

8. EGM Co Ltd, Loloma, TPP, FMD Euronesian Employees Rates and Conditions of Pay Oct 1940, Vat/.


11. Service record cards of Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.


13. The minimum half-caste wage excluded 'youths' on between 3/- (16 years) and 5/- (18 years). Fijian 'youths' were also on less than the basic rate.

14. Service record cards of Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.

15. ibid
16. Wage Rates and Conditions of Employment ... Oct 1936 & Dec 1943; Managing Director Theodore to Secretary, Fijian Committee, 7.9.37, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

17. Dept Managers Meeting minutes, 22.8.46, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File; Managing Director Theodore to Secretary Fijian Committee, 7.9.37, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

18. Managing Director to Nilsen, 16.11.40, Vat/Loloma.

19. Theodore, Managing Director EGM, Loloma, TPP to Secretary TPP, 27.2.40, Vat/Confidential to 1940; ibid Local Secretary EGM to E.G. Theodore, 20.3.40; ibid Local Secretary EGM to General Manager, 24.7.40.

20. These were made in Dec 1940, Nov 1945 and Dec 1947. General Manager memo to Chief Accountant, 20.1.41, Vat/Emperor Confidential 1941; Managing Director to Nilsen, 16.11.40, Vat/Loloma; General Manager Associated Mining Companies Notice, 1.11.47, Vat/Confidential Salaries, Staff etc Jan 1945-Oct 1948.

21. Schedule for Euronesians, 1943; General Manager Associated Mining Companies Notice, 1.11.47, Vat/Confidential Salaries, Staff etc Jan 1945-Oct 1948. Note, the government and other employers had already made direct wage increases or improved their cost of living allowances. See ibid General Manager to Theodore, 31.10.47.

22. Managing Director to Secretary EGM Melbourne, 11.4.40, Vat/Confidential to 1940; ibid Director of Agriculture to CS confidential memo, 16.5.40.

23. Theodore Managing Director EGM, Loloma, TPP to Secretary TPP, 27.2.40, Vat/Confidential to 1940. A similar argument was used by mining capital in South Africa. See Johnstone op. cit. pp 188-190.

24. Even the companies admitted the burden on married workers. In 1951, Cayzer estimated that they absorbed 100% of the increased cost of rations supplied to single men but only 70% of those to married men. Cayzer General Manager to Nilsen Chief General Manager, 2.4.51, Vat/Emperor & Loloma Confidential Current File. See also Community Officer to General Manager, 7.8.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944 re. increases in the cost of clothing etc.

25. See chapter five re. education levies. Wage deductions for sport were made in respect of Europeans and half-castes (at 5/-) as well as Fijians (at 1/-) in 1939. See Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar 1938- Sept 1939.

26. The companies demanded a minimum donation of 1/- from all employees; those refusing to volunteer this had 1/- deducted from their wages although they could register their objections with management. Community Officer to General Manager re. Meeting Emperor Fijian Committee on 24.6.42, 25.6.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944.
27. Managing Director memo, 29.7.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944; ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 18.9.42; ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 8.1.43; ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 24.4.43; see C.A.


29. Nilsen General Manager to Local Secretary EGM Melbourne, 10.3.42, Vat/Emperor Mine Employees Engagements, Rents etc.


31. Community Officer (Garnett) to General Manager, 24.9.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944; Nilsen Notice, 27.6.48, Vat/.

32. Minutes of Dept Managers Meetings held 28.1.44, Vat Meetings of Executives Current File.

33. Service record cards Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.

34. EGM Underground Safety Officer to Production Manager memo, 20.1.67, MR/Bunch 20, M541/1 Pt 3.

35. The only significant change in the racial composition of the work-force was the rise in the number of races other than European and Fijian which would probably have largely resulted from the employment of more Indians from the mid-1940's. Changes in the ratio of European to other races between 1938 and 1948 reflected this i.e. 1:1.8 (1938) to 1:3.2 (1948). Employment figures taken from N.E. Nilsen to Sir Philip Mitchell: Return of Employees Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula for period ending 5.5.48, 7.8.42, CSO Fni/30/1 Pt 1.

36. This is calculated by taking the average of labour unit costs for 1940 (from table 4.9) and the Fijian proportion (42%) of the total wages and salaries bill for Mar 1940-Mar 1941 (from table 4.8).
Section V

1. Nilsen to Theodore cable, 12.10.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar 1938-Sept 1939; Nilsen to Chairman of Directors, Loloma, 6.11.39, Vat/LGMNL Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939-1940.

2. Nilsen to Theodore, 2.12.45, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN; ibid Theodore to Nilsen, 7.8.46; Nilsen to Theodore, 26.1.48; Nilsen to Theodore, 30.4.48; Nilsen to Theodore, 5.7.48; Nilsen to Theodore, 9.6.48.

3. Managing Director to Secretary Emperor Mines Ltd, 9.11.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; ibid Assessment of (European) miners, undated circa May 1935; ibid A.M. Raine to E.G. Theodore (Fiji), 30.4.35.

4. Nilsen to Theodore, 14.2.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944.


7. ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 6.1.47.

8. ibid Nilsen to Theodore, 9.6.48.

9. Managing Director Theodore to Legal Manager Emperor Mines Ltd, 28.10.35, Vat/Loloma Correspondence & Reports Jan 1936-Feb 1938.

10. ibid

11. Managing Director to Secretary Emperor Mines Ltd, 9.11.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

12. Theodore Managing Director EGM, Loloma, TPP to Secretary TPP, 27.2.40, Vat/Confidential to 1940; Minutes of Joint Meeting of Finance Committees of Emperor Mines Ltd EGM, Loloma, TPP, 17.4.44, Vat/Emperor Confidential Feb 1942-June 1944.

13. In 1940, the wage scale applied to European miners was £5 - £6/10/- per week (£260 - £338 p.a.) and that for European mill operators £5 - £7 per week (£260 - £364 p.a.). The half-caste wage scales were 7/- - 14/- per day (i.e. £2/2/- - £4/4/- per week) and 7/- - 13/- (i.e. £2/2/- - £3/18/- per week) respectively. Vat/Confidential to 1940. Data also taken from Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935; Extract of information supplied by Emperor and Loloma to Mining Board re. conditions of service - rates of pay and housing of half-caste miners, CSO F36/39/1; Queensland Insurance Co Ltd Statement of Wages EGM Co Ltd, Vat/Loloma Mine Employees, Insurance etc.
14. In August 1948, half-caste winder drivers were paid between 11/- and 14/- a day. (see Return of Employees Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula, August 1948) In 1941 European winder engine drivers were paid £9/4/- a week. Queensland Insurance Co Ltd Statement of Wages Loloma (Fiji) GMNL Mar 1941-1942, Vat/Loloma Mine Employees, Insurance etc.

15. This is calculated on the basis of average rates of 10/- per day & £5 - £6/10/- per week in 1940; and average rates of 7/- - 17/- per day & £6/10/- - £10/10/- per week in 1948.

16. Vat/Emperor Mine Employees, Engagements, Rents etc.

17. General Manager to Chairman of Directors, Loloma, 6.11.39, Vat/LGMNL Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939-40; EGM Co Ltd, Loloma TPP FMD Euronesian Employees Rates and Conditions of Pay Oct 1940, Vat/; Nilsen to Theodore, 14.6.46, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN; Nilsen sung the praises of half-caste fitters and compared them with an Australian fitter on £8 per week 'who is no where near as good'. Nilsen to Theodore, 6.1.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN


19. Minutes of Joint Consultative Council, 6.3.67, Vat/Goldmining Joint Consultative Council Meetings.

20. Nilsen to Theodore, 6.1.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

21. ibid
Map 4: Vatukoula General Property Plan, 1940

FIJI MINES DEVELOPMENT LTD

LOLOMA (FIJI) GOLD MINES N.L.

EMPEROR GOLD MINING CO. LTD.

Legend:
- Native quarters
- Half caste quarters
- European quarters

Scale: 1:500 yards

Map 4: Vatukoula General Property Plan, 1940
CHAPTER FIVE
THE WORKING AND LIVING CONDITIONS
OF FIJIAN MINeworkERS 1934-50

Discrimination, Control and Deprivation

I Introduction: State Perspectives

This chapter examines the conditions of work for mine labour and the physical and social environment outside the workplace. These, it is proposed, offer further evidence of a rationalised system of cheap and controlled labour. Sparing investment was made in the health and safety of mineworkers; the mines' housing, recreational, education and medical services shared the characteristics of cost discrimination applied to earnings; and infrastructural development was fashioned explicitly on the principle of racial segregation. While not uniform, institutionalised segregation was pervasive. Its divisive effects were to be given angry expression particularly during the troubles of 1947. (see chapter six)

The state's acceptance of the need for low cost labour logically entailed support for the minimisation of expenditure on welfare like any other return to labour outside direct earnings. As an employer of labour itself, its policies were directly influenced by the imperatives of economic stringency. It was no coincidence then, that in the aftermath of indenture, inspections of labour conditions gradually lapsed and that 'during the period 1930-1940 ... there was less supervision of labour conditions than at any previous period of the colony's history'.

1
Against this, however, there was a growing belief that labour conditions in some parts of the colony could no longer be sanctioned—international labour conventions, labour disturbances in a number of colonies, and a post-war labour government in Britain all being prominent amongst the less parochial influences on colonial policy. Closer to home, the unsettling effect of the Pacific war on industrial relations also led the administration to question the efficacy of existing industrial legislation as a means of labour control, and the prudence of continued resistance to labour reforms. (see chapter six)

Externally induced changes included the Minimum Wage Ordinance of 1935, the Workmen's Compensation Ordinances of 1940 and 1946, the Labour (Welfare) Ordinance of 1941, the Labour Ordinance of 1947 (abolishing penal sanctions), the appointment of an Industrial Relations Officer and the establishment of a Labour Department. On the whole, labour legislation was not introduced without fierce opposition from the leading business interests in the colony; and the administration was well aware that it had the invidious alternative of yielding to their pressure or inviting the 'odium' of '... a section [of the community] whose co-operation in the tasks of administration we so badly need.' For this reason, its attitude to (actively) intervening in the area of labour welfare remained ambivalent and legislative reforms proved less effective in practice than they appeared in print.

On one level, there was a conflict between administrative and medical officers as to whether existing public health, labour and mining laws were adequate for ensuring acceptable living standards and medical care of wage labour. On another, there were opposing
appraisals of the actual standards of housing and hygiene. But whatever the criticism there was of conditions for mine, like copra plantation, labour; and whatever the disagreement was generated over where the responsibility for this lay, the result was that official policy continued to be governed by the needs of capital and by the government's own interests as an employer of Fijian labour.

Secretariat correspondence over the conditions for plantation and mine labour illustrated well the motley political, economic and ethical pressures influencing official thinking during the late 1930's and 1940's. In particular, it demonstrated the political leverage which European copra planters and mining capital commanded over colonial policy. Faced with the horrifying reality of estate management, officers were unanimous in their condemnation of housing and sanitation on the plantations. Of the notorious lines on the island of Taveuni, the Commissioner of Labour went so far as to suggest in 1944 that

It would probably be fair to suggest that the absence of latrines has been responsible for deaths of young children; that the lack of ventilation and the damp conditions arising from failure to maintain sleeping huts in weather-proof order have led to tuberculosis; and that other diseases have resulted from conditions of squalor and filth that have to be seen to be believed. 5

The explanation for this reprehensible situation, as members of the medical bureaucracy saw it, was the inappropriate or outmoded legislation that governed the living conditions of wage labour. The law did not demand sufficiently high standards of housing, hygiene or rations, nor did it extend substantive legal protection to plantation workers. 6 But against this, C.S. de Reay, the Commissioner of Labour, and other administrative officers insisted that existing legislation was far from permissive since public
health and labour laws gave ample direction and considerable powers for the regulation of labour conditions. When debated in the Legislative Council, the Public Health Ordinance (1935) was pronounced by one European member to be 'a very drastic' piece of legislation. Reay went further to suggest that the provisions of 19th century labour law – notably the Fijian Labour Ordinance of 1895 – made it unnecessary even to use it.⁷

The quality of existing legislation was undoubtedly of importance. What was more telling of the state's role in the colonial economy was its failure to enforce it. Administrative officers were themselves extraordinarily frank about the sensitive political issues that lay behind this. The political stature of European capital, in particular the planters (using low copra prices as their excuse), inhibited local authorities from insisting that 'large concerns' comply with the law. Sanitary inspectors hesitated even to inspect estate quarters, and '... where the interests of the Taveuni planter and labourer conflict, those of the former have almost invariably prevailed, even in a court of justice.'⁸ As Sir Henry Scott had urged in 1935, the administration of the Public Health Ordinance was indeed 'tempered with sweet reasonableness.'⁹

Moreover, far from being exemplary, the standard of government housing was itself extremely low and so medical officers were reluctant even to criticise the conditions existing on other, private, labour lines. In 1940, the Acting Director of Medical Services remarked that he had seen 'PWD labour lines (e.g. Lautoka) which exceeded in squalor anything in the vicinity'.¹⁰ Government lines on Taveuni, the Governor conceded five years later, 'leave much to be desired'.¹¹ Finally, the state's long standing tolerance
of conditions on European plantations made its dilatory efforts to improve them especially difficult to justify. The Director of Medical Services put it bluntly:

...our position is greatly weakened by the fact that we have ourselves connived for so long at the arrangement under which the Regulations were, by mutual consent, kept in cold storage. 12

Official debate over conditions at Vatukoula raised similar questions. Fijian barracks, the Inspector of Mines (White) insisted, provided the per capita air space prescribed by the Public Health Ordinance and Regulations. Both he and the Medical Officer of Health Northern (Taylor) shared the belief that it was the deficiency of the colony's laws rather than its administrators that was to blame. According to Taylor,

The housing of the single Fijian labourers is, I consider, very bad. Although legally the huts are not overcrowded the general impression one gets of human beings put away on shelves till further required is not a good one. 13

Yet, the vague and unspecific nature of the mining regulations, it was later argued, gave the Inspector of Mines 'almost dictatorial' powers, and in general promoted strict control of mining activities and conditions. And in the post-war period, at least, the failure of inspectors to use these powers fully was attributable to other factors: to the declining profitability of the industry and the political propaganda which surrounded this. Aside from a personal interest in survival, inspectors tended to dismiss uneconomic improvements in favour of retaining an industry regarded as a vital source of national revenue and an important centre for local employment. 14
Ultimately, the regulations governing the welfare of Fijian mine labour put the latter at a double disadvantage. The failure to prescribe in precise terms many of the requisites of safe and healthy conditions of work and living not only left the interpretation of the law open to manipulation but also made it extremely difficult for labour to make legitimate demands. State assistance to capital thus consisted both in the content and in the application of legislation.

The need for more comprehensive regulations governing the housing of mine labour was recognised by the Governor (Fletcher) early in 1936. His successor, Sir Arthur Richards, appointed a committee '...to formulate additional rules governing housing, hours of work, rationing, sanitation, medical care, and other matters affecting the welfare of natives employed in mining.' But by 1938, at a time of rapid expansion of activities and a corresponding rise in migration to the mines, the committee had achieved no more than 'a certain amount of preparatory work...'

Within two years, the colony had its first Industrial Relations Officer in C.S. de Reay. Reay's intention to investigate the working and living conditions of mineworkers, though well within his mandate, met with outright hostility from the Vatukoula management. Even the intervention of the Colonial Secretary (Barton), in an attempt to dispel fears of mischievous official probing, drew a blank from Theodore:

The relations between our companies and their employees is, at present, harmonious and satisfactory; but I believe could easily be upset if it became known to the large body of employees here that an authoritative Government Officer is here to enquire into real or fancied grievances.
The government showed its ambivalence in other ways. Although the mine area was inspected by district and medical officers, and a government medical practitioner was appointed to the mines in 1936 to give free medical treatment to mine labour, formal criticisms of living conditions were evidently ignored at times by the central administration. In February 1936, for example, the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, H.C. Monckton, advised the Colonial Secretary that Fijian housing and wages were so attractive that

the mines have attracted labour to such an extent as to make it difficult for other industries, which cannot afford such good conditions to obtain adequate labour. 19

Armstrong similarly concluded that labourers were 'well fed and well paid.' 20

Beside the appalling conditions of indentured and 'free' labour on the copra plantations, it was easy to see why romantic descriptions such as these should prevail in official circles. But this did not detract from the fact that housing and sanitary standards at the mines were, as often acknowledged, extremely low; and that the impressions conveyed to the Colonial Office were, on the whole, quite misleading. 21

If glowing despatches flew in the face of observations by local field officers, official thinking was also out of line with contemporary ideology in other parts of the Empire. In 1937, a Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry into labour disturbances in Trinidad and Tobago revealed strong prejudice against the longstanding tradition of accommodating labourers in barracks. It recognised, unequivocally, that the 'mental', 'moral' and 'physical' condition of workers was seriously undermined by this type of
In Fiji, it was recommended five years later that the mines' barracks should, after the war, 'give way to houses for not more than 12 men and should be ventilated and equipped in accordance with public health legislation.' Sir Alexander Grantham, appointed Governor in 1944, similarly advised against the construction of any more labour lines and pressed for their replacement by separate housing. It was not to be. As late as the 1960's, new barracks were being built at Vatukoula and the majority of Fijian mineworkers was still housed in these crude structures.

Early concern to regulate conditions on the gold fields prompted an investigation into the nutritional value of mine rations in 1938. While superior to the mean staple diet of plantation labour, they were found to be deficient in essential vitamins. Predictably, however, the inconvenience and cost of having to supplement rice, meat, bread and sugar with fresh green vegetables, milk and fruit, raised loud objections from the mining companies. (see tables 5.1 and 5.2) Theodore succeeded in stalling the government from yielding to pressure from the Colonial Office or enforcing the recommendations of the local nutrition committee, arguing that shortages of these foodstuffs made it 'practically impossible' to supply them. He protested further that only a small proportion of the mining workforce was employed underground.

A few years later, the attempts of the Labour Department to improve the scale of rations supplied by other employers - in particular the planters - were similarly obstructed. The prescribed scale, it was argued, was out of the question because of infrequent shipping, transport costs, and the scarcity of commodities. Some, in dismissing the proposal to provide butter, fruit, milk and
### TABLE 5.1
RATIONS SUPPLIED TO EACH FIJIAN EMPLOYEE* AS AT SEPTEMBER 1938 BY EGM, LOLOMA & TPP COMPANIES

**DAILY**
- 1 lb bread
- ½ lb fresh OR corned Beef - or when meat is not supplied -
- 1 lb rice OR
- 1 lb of tinned beef (on not less than 3 days weekly), OR
- ½ lb rice
- 2½-3 lbs yams, dalo & kumala when available
- ½ lb Sugar

**WEEKLY**
- 2 oz Fijian tobacco
- 4 oz tea
- 4 oz soap
- 8 oz salt

Curry powder, kerosene, matches & sandsoap to each Fijian mess weekly.

* extra half ration for married worker accompanied by wife.

**Source:** Theodore, Managing Director EGM & Loloma to CS, 22.9.38, CSO F48/222.

### TABLE 5.2
RATION SCALE PROPOSED FOR FIJIAN MINEWORKERS* BY GOVERNMENT NUTRITION COMMITTEE, 1938

**DAILY**
- 1 lb bread
- 2 lb Fijian vegetables (dalo, yam or breadfruit) OR
- 1 lb rice (rice not to be substituted for root crops on more than 3 days weekly)
- ½ lb fresh meat, OR
- ½ lb of tinned beef (on not more than 2 days weekly), OR
- ½ lb of fresh fish or tinned salmon (on not less than 2 days weekly)
- ½ lb sugar
- ½ pint fresh milk
- 6 oz uncooked green vegetables (including cabbage, beans, dalo leaves for 'rourou' etc.) OR
- 2 oz onions (on not more than 3 days weekly)

**WEEKLY**
- 2 oz tobacco
- 4 oz tea
- 4 oz soap
- 8 oz salt

And a weekly helping of seasonal fresh fruit (bananas, pineapples, oranges, etc.)

* Extra half ration for a married indentured worker accompanied by wife and family until the company provides land for the cultivation of native crops.

**Source:** Ration Scale for Fijian Workers in the Gold Mines in Fiji, CSO F48/222.
vegetables, even argued that these were not a part of the traditional Fijian diet.\textsuperscript{26}

By 1940, the medical team headed by Dr. A.G. Hemsley (see section two) had associated the unbalanced diet of mineworkers with their poor health; and had endorsed the view that dietary supplementation was necessary. Additional cereal or starch, sugar and fat were believed essential for men engaged in underground mine or other 'very heavy work'; and a saline mixture, used to effect in the South African mines, was approved. High vitamin food such as fruit and fresh vegetables was also desirable since it helped to maintain work efficiency and diminished the risk of sickness.\textsuperscript{27} International opinion did not, however, suffice to spur the local government into insisting upon improvements in the diet of rationed mine labour. In respect of plantation labour, it seemed resigned to the intransigence of the estate owners. Referring to a ration scale recommended in 1944, Reay commented later that 'It was no good, of course, talking to copra planters about butter'.\textsuperscript{28}

Apart from an increase in the quantity of root crops offered as an alternative to rice, the pre-war ration scale of Fijian mineworkers was at no stage significantly improved. In 1947, the Theodore group rejected a request from its workers for an increase in the ration of fresh meat, even though the cost of this was to be offset by a reduction in the issue of other food items.\textsuperscript{29} Neither fruit nor vegetables was ever added to a diet heavy in carbohydrates and sugar, and though planting land was made available to workers, this was limited and subject to the contaminating effects of (mill) production. (see section III) Traditional foodstuffs brought in from outside the mining area were often of poor quality, 'scarce'
and 'at times unobtainable'. Only through the efforts of the mineworkers' union during the late 1950's was Emperor to be persuaded to provide milk powder; and it was not until 1966 that the union's protracted battle to abolish the system altogether was finally won.
When I joined the union I felt very strongly about the segregated housing. I talked with the welfare chap and he said it was because Fijians weren't educated. The company couldn't give them decent homes because they'd drink grog and spit everywhere. It was the same thing with toilets.

(Interview, half caste worker, Suva, August 1982)

Standards of housing, dining and sanitation at Vatukoula reflected the principle of stratification in the workplace and the racialist ideology which underpinned this. Wooden-floored, ceiled, fly-proof and with electric light, the quarters for single European mineworkers offered spacious accommodation of 60 sq ft per person in addition to 'suitable bathing and sanitary facilities.' There were generally only two men allocated to a room, and both were provided with a bed, bedding, a wardrobe and a chair, and the room had a table. Half-caste barracks were (in the early years) earthen floored, giving each man a canvas stretcher and a space of 40 sq ft. The most outstanding discrepancy consisted in the overcrowded and badly ventilated iron and wooden barracks for Fijian labour. Accommodating 24 or 36 men in theory, these confined each worker to an area of only 15 sq ft and, in the way of furnishings, offered only a wooden bunk without a mattress.

The placing of Fijian labour in barracks according to province of origin helped to aggravate communal tensions and rivalries. (see chapter six) But in an industry which operated continuously, this practice also had the unpleasant effect of depriving afternoon and night shift workers of sufficient undisturbed sleep during the day.
In April 1935, a short time after the mines' first epidemic of dysentery had been reported, the colony's Chief Medical Officer gave a graphic description of Theodore's 'native' camp:

About 48 labour were living in two huts 24 by 16 feet, and there are 12 bunks on each side 6 upper and 6 lower. The space between the upper and lower bunks is about 3 feet. There is very little vacant space in this building, as there is only a main passage way between the two lines of bunks which is about 2'6" and there is only a space of about a foot or so between the bunks in the row. I consider the ventilation in these huts to be insufficient and that they are overcrowded. The authorities in charge promised to build an additional hut to relieve the congestion. 2

If the companies complied, construction failed to keep pace with their fast expanding recruitment. Indeed, by early in the following year, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the barracks were housing 73 more 'boys' than there were bunks for. There was greater congestion once the group began, as an economy measure, to allocate some of its married workers (with wives and children) to barracks. In the absence of partitioning walls, each family area more or less spilled over into another. 3 Following the first major strike in November 1938, it transpired that numbers in the Emperor barracks had doubled, reducing per capita space to a mere eight sq.ft. The Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police was moved to protest:

I am not qualified, nor do I desire, to question the proprietary[sic] of housing such a number of men in these huts, but I was astounded to find in some of them that, by fixing a plank in the narrow dividing passage way, two single bunks were thus converted into quarters for married men, some of whom have families. Although in each of these huts a number of single men continued in residence it was left to the occupants of these palatial quarters to devise means whereby they may obtain even the slightest degree of privacy. On visiting these huts at night I was disgusted to find the interior infested with vermin. 4
Government inspections were more than a little irritating to management because of the cost and the inconvenience of making the recommended improvements. Following the enquiry into the November strike, the single men's camp was transferred to a healthier site away from the mill; and Nilsen agreed to use more labour to maintain hygienic living quarters as part of a general campaign to upgrade conditions. He was unwilling, however, to approve expenditure for the construction of more 'native dwellings' (i.e. houses for families) until the results of prevailing mining exploration were known. Writing to Theodore, he did not conceal his exasperation:

Government Medical Officers and Sanitary Inspectors have been riding me of late and making it a bit hot, in that I have had to spend a bit of money improving sanitary conditions. 5

Not surprisingly, accommodation for single Fijians continued to be 'somewhat over taxed' and the number of married houses to fall far short of requirements. 6 In 1939, a batch of 80 Fijians indentured for twelve months from the island of Koro in Lomaiviti found that there were no bunks awaiting them on arrival at the mines. 7 And although under pressure, management reverted to separated bunks and constructed more 'native' houses and barracks, 8 improvements were shortlived. As the settlement expanded in the post-war period, families were again placed in barrack accommodation. Overcrowding prevented even the storage of cooking utensils inside and put the limited bathing facilities and (drinking) water supply under still greater strain. By September 1951, the companies' community and welfare department confirmed that 'from the Public Health point of view', the congestion in the family barracks 'definitely constitutes one of the public nuisances'. 9
Discrimination was equally apparent in the quality of family housing. The wooden cottages for European workers boasted four or five rooms, comfortable furnishings and, at least until 1944, were equipped with cooking utensils. Many were situated on the hilltops where they commanded splendid panoramas of the surrounding countryside. Fijian houses, allocated to married workers only on condition that they contracted to work for a minimum of six months, comprised an unfurnished single room (18 ft by 12 ft) and an outdoor cooking cubicle. They had no individual bathing or toilet facilities. Their location in the valleys, their unceiled roofs, and construction in corrugated iron rather than wood made them highly susceptible to day and night changes in temperature. The exposure between the upper part of the wall and the roof caused them to leak in wet weather; and because there was no cupboard space provided, their occupants faced the problem of storing and safeguarding food from flies. Shortages of kerosene during the war led to a request by Fijian workers for their houses to be provided, at their own cost, with electricity. It was not company policy, they were advised, 'to instal electric lighting in Native houses'.

Discrepancies in housing standards were reflected in the comparative costs of construction. In 1936, the cost of European married quarters varied between £350 and £1,500; half-caste quarters a minimum of £200; and Fijian quarters around £70. Ten years later, it cost the group over £1,000 to build the average European house (with a maximum of £3,600), and £750 and £200 for half-caste and Fijian houses. The provision of family housing for Europeans incurred the additional (and exclusive) expense of furniture and other amenities such as mosquito gauzing, baths, lighting, and individual washhouses and septic tanks.
The crude standard of Fijian dining and kitchen facilities also contrasted with the salubrious and congenial eating environment of the European messes. In 1935, they were criticised as 'far from satisfactory', yet by the 1960's, the dining room for single men was still without walls - 'as it is intended purely as a shelter not as a "room"' - and had an unceiled roof and a concrete ungraded floor (to facilitate hosing down) which meant that water collected underfoot. Men had to supply their own plates or bowls. Kitchens in the Fijian married barracks had dirt floors which during the wet months were continuously muddy.

The paucity of bathing and washing facilities required Fijians to use the river and creeks which flowed through the settlement. The same water was used for cooking and drinking. The health risks of consuming untreated river water - apparent in the persistent outbreaks of dysentery - were not, moreover, caused solely by its use for domestic hygiene. Cyanide pollution posed another hazard. Anxious about the possible contamination of its agricultural land, the CSR reported the pollution of the Tavua water supply to the Mining Board in May 1935. Spillage from the mines' tailing dam had introduced cyanide of a concentration 0.096 ppm. A government inspection declared the effluent of toxic chemical to be 'too weak to be harmful' but the group was instructed to submit proposals for its future disposal of tailings before installing more plant, and to enlarge its dam.

Over the next four years, observations of river contamination were recorded by the local District Commissioner. These took more direct form in 1942 when a senior medical officer charged that the mines' domestic water supply was unfit for human consumption if it remained
untreated. On at least three occasions, the filtration and/or chlorination of river water was recommended as the only viable if costly solution. Indian members of the Legislative Council repeatedly expressed concern about the exposure of local farmers and other residents to industrial sludge, but although mining regulations prohibited the discharge of 'any chemical or other substance deleterious to animal or vegetable life' into a 'water-course', leakages of industrial (and other) waste continued long after water contamination was first identified. Government intervention was half-hearted - checked by a sensitivity to the cost of prescribed action - and available records suggest that the group was never prosecuted.

In 1937, following several outbreaks of typhoid and dysentery, management approved the inoculation of workers against typhoid - at no cost to itself. For its own part, it chose only to prohibit bathing and clothes washing in the vicinity of the pump house; and to offer a token financial incentive to Fijian and half-caste families to improve their own living conditions:

12.6.37 NOTICE NOTICE NOTICE

IN ORDER THAT WE MAY IMPROVE THE ORDERLINESS, APPEARANCE AND SANITARY CONDITIONS OF OUR COMMUNITY, THE EMPEROR GOLD MINING COMPANY OFFER A PRIZE OF £1.0.0. FOR THE BEST KEPT YARD AND HOME OVER A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS, COMMENCING FROM JUNE 12TH.

JUDGES: GENERAL MANAGER, ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER, DISTRICT MEDICAL OFFICER

PRIZE: ON 'PAY DAY' SEPT 4TH

SIGNED: NILSEN, GENERAL MANAGER 22
The rising number of dysentery cases amongst Fijian minewokers during 1938 fortunately failed to reach epidemic proportions. They were, however, serious enough to require an isolation camp to be prepared on the field following the hospitalisation of victims in the main towns along the north and west coasts of Viti Levu. Dysentery continued to be a recurring health problem through the 1940's, particularly affecting children; and with the deteriorating standards of housing and sanitation during the 1950's and 1960's, the number of casualties was to reach alarming proportions. (see chapter seven)

Until 1940, only European housing was provided with toilet facilities serviced by individual septic tanks. For Fijians, there were earth latrines to which no sewerage system could be attached. This exposed them to soil infestations by ankylostoma and other worm larvae as well as heightening the risk of contracting dysentery or typhoid. In April 1936, there was an outbreak of ringworm and tropical sores amongst Fijian workers; and the health survey of 1939 revealed an extraordinarily high incidence (about 80% of Fijians examined) of ankylostomiosis or hookworm, a debilitating and potentially fatal condition induced by an intestinal parasite commonly associated with mining. There were also many cases of other worm infections - whipworm, roundworm, threadworm and a species of tapeworm. (see table 5.3.)

Analysis of surface soil showed heavy pollution indicating 'haphazard defecation thereabouts' but the sampling of underground earth dispelled fears of pollution below the surface. This was attributed to adequate sanitary precautions, notably salting twice weekly, and the company ruling on 'underground defecation'. As in
### TABLE 5.3

**INCIDENCE OF HOOKWORM AND OTHER WORMS**

**ASSOCIATED MINES, VATUKOULA, 1939**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Numbers examined and not defaulting</th>
<th>With worms of any form</th>
<th>With Hookworm alone</th>
<th>With worms other than Hookworm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons of Mixed Descent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Fijians</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data for this table is taken from Inspector of Mines and Mining Engineer to Director of Mines memo, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.
the case of tuberculosis, the endemic nature of worm infections in the colony was used to justify its exclusion from listing as an occupational disease. The low incidence of anaemia amongst the 675 Fijians, half-castes and Europeans examined suggested, however, that infection had been recently contracted - therefore at the mines.\textsuperscript{26}

Charged with maintaining unacceptably low standards of sanitation, the group took steps to replace its crude latrine system by fly proof septic tanks and to improve its system of garbage disposal. Between 1940 and 1942, about £8,000 was spent in 'sanitary improvements' and a further £800 p.a. was committed to maintaining a more efficient 'garbage service'.\textsuperscript{27} Expenditure of this nature was a wise investment, the Inspector of Mines observed: the cost of preventive care and treatment of hookworm, for example, would be 'abundantly repaid by increased efficiency of the worker.'\textsuperscript{28}

Measures taken to improve sanitation and the provision of boots (from 1946) did not, however, suffice to eradicate the disease. By the late 1940's, the soil underground had also become contaminated and hookworm spread uncontrollably amongst Fijian and half-caste labour. Claiming that the disease 'does not appear to inconvenience the natives', management did concede that '...it undoubtedly is the underlying cause of much of the ill-health they experience in that it undermines their constitution and renders them susceptible to many common ailments'. In spite of this, only Europeans were 'periodically' tested for the disease.\textsuperscript{29}

Medical care was another important area in which labour costs were contained. As outlined in the previous chapter, Fijians were excluded from the mines' medical benefit fund and received no sick
pay. But in addition, the colony's medical infrastructure and specifically its provision of hospital and related services to all 'natives', enabled the industry to charge the state responsible for the treatment of its hospitalised Fijian (and Indian) workers. Together with their dependants, they were generally treated at a small and poorly serviced district hospital at Nailaga, Ba; while for half-castes and Europeans, the facilities of a subsidised 'cottage' hospital owned by the CSR were available at cost. Both hospitals were over 20 miles from Vatukoula; and unlike European and half-caste patients who were transported by ambulance, Fijians travelled by utility truck and (later) by bus. The group did not conceal the purpose of this discriminatory policy. When, in 1942, Fijian workers asked that dysentery and other contagious disease cases be transported by ambulance, they were advised in no uncertain terms that the bus fare (at 3/- a patient) was cheaper.

Through its policy of discharging and sending home sick men, capital also passed on the cost of Fijian medical care to the home villages. The practice not only spared it the expense of carrying unproductive labour and restoring it to health, but in the case of diseases like dysentery, venereal disease, tuberculosis or trachoma, had the insidious effect of transferring the high risks of contagion to the rural areas. The village offered a preferred isolation ward to the local hospitals which, because they were often forced to discharge patients prematurely, meant that the industry had to meet the cost of rations, transport and follow-up medical care. At no time were such considerations more obviously of importance than in 1941 following an outbreak of trachoma. The possibility of the disease spreading through the settlement especially if patients continued to be discharged from hospital before they were completely
cured, led to the extraordinary decision that 'mild' cases would be treated locally and 'serious' cases would be sent home. 

Medical facilities at the mines were at best rudimentary. By 1941, the population of Vatukoula stood at around 3,000 and it was generally agreed that 'the most outstanding need is to provide hospital accommodation'. The steady stabilisation of labour during the 1940's and the expansion of the community that followed, placed available services under increasing pressure. Medical infrastructure, however, remained that of a small company-administered dispensary with a skeleton staff. Unwilling to commit shareholders' capital to establishing a hospital on the field, the group sought to convince the government that the scale of migration to the gold fields and the size of Vatukoula's resident population warranted its investment in the medical care of mine labour.

Government health services in the neighbouring districts were ill-equipped to cope with the new burden. But despite the low standard of available facilities like Nailaga hospital, and the strong opposition of Fijians to being treated there, the administration gave priority to upgrading services in the more distant centre of Lautoka after the war. Rural hospitals in Ba and Ra, it was decided, were to continue being used simply as 'buffers to the main district units.'

As far as the group's propositions were concerned, there was little official enthusiasm. There were ample precedents in Northern Rhodesia and the Gold Coast where mining interests had, in line with their legal obligations, introduced and maintained their own medical
services. And these, together with the cost of maintaining existing facilities in the colony, convinced the Acting Colonial Secretary that there was no justification for asking the taxpayer to bear all manner of additional burdens in order to lighten the burdens of the extremely prosperous Mining Companies. 39

Moreover, fifty years after its enactment, the Labour Medical Care Ordinance of 1891 was still on the statute books in its original form. Under section 17, the group was required to provide its Fijian workers with sufficient medical attendance and with suitable accommodation and such medicine and nursing as may be ordered by a medical officer. 40

The government's failure to enforce the ordinance — something which apparently mystified Reay 41 — may well have been due to its narrow scope, specifically its provisions for workers but not for their dependants. It was indeed this distinction that gave Theodore grounds to question the legitimacy of its application to the mining industry. 42 Yet against this, the Mining Regulations of 1935 also placed mine employers under obligation to provide medical care. 43 And if in fact the mandates of both pieces of legislation were unduly restrictive, nothing was done to rectify this. One consequence was that no hospital was ever built at the mines.

Publicly, management peddled the myth of a salubrious life for all through the colony's only English language daily newspaper, the Fiji Times and Herald. Early in 1951, an oblique reference to unsatisfactory standards by one self-titled Na Lokobono drew in response a slick and glossy account of living conditions from general manager C.W. Cayzer. 44 A further letter from the pen-named correspondent challenged the authenticity of this. It was withheld
from publication but passed on to Cayzer by Alport Barker, editor and proprietor of the paper and European member of the Legislative Council for the southern division. In it, Na Lokobono described how the furnishings of Fijian barracks comprised only wooden planks for beds, and how the overcrowded settlement of Lololevu, contrary to Cayzer's account, consisted of traditional bures built and paid for by the men (or families) themselves and smaller than the specifications of the Fijian regulations. The settlement had no sewerage system or electricity and relied on the polluted Nasivi River as its only source of domestic water. \(^{45}\)

An informed and incisive description of conditions at the mines, purged of Cayzer's artful propaganda, could not be permitted to tarnish the companies public image. 'Needless to say,' Barker joked, 'I am not publishing it - I am not risking a libel action!!' Racist attitudes still ran deep within the European community and Barker was no exception:

Some of these Fijians are really impossible - Fancy providing the ordinary labour with spring mattresses, tables & chairs! Of course he uses all of these in his own home! \(^{46}\)

The veneer of public respectability was not, however, to shield the companies from criticism within the workforce and in particular the challenge of a vocal union leadership after 1948. (see chapter six)
III Conditions of Work and Occupational Health

It is a different air underground. When you first go down, your breath becomes short and your ears ring. The only way you can tell someone is talking to you is by seeing his mouth move. Men go off sick after two weeks for a few days, maybe up to a month. They cough, get backache and go cold and hot from the change. It is a whole new experience ... They work you very very hard. If you are feeling crook, they swear at you ... One day, I got fed up. I went to get some water; my shift boss asked me what I was doing and swore at me. I shouted at him, 'We are machine. We are animal.' I went to kill him but one boy stop me ... Now I'm too old.

(Rotuman mineworker, Vatukoula, July 1982)

Capital's commitment to minimising the cost of labour was also demonstrated in its negligible expenditure on underground ventilation, protective clothing and other facilities designed to alleviate conditions of intense heat, humidity and dustiness and so to protect the health of mineworkers. Underground mine work at Vatukoula was a constant test of physical stamina and mental alacrity, for added to the demands of what was, and still is, generally agreed to be an extraordinarily strenuous and hazardous occupation, was the enervating and noisy environment in which work had to be undertaken.

Temperatures rose to well over 100°F as underground mining deepened from the 1950's; but even during the earlier years at comparatively shallow depths, were far from congenial. This was particularly so when driving and cross-cutting were being undertaken at new levels and in other areas away from the working face where air currents were poor. Water seeping in through the rock was hot. Even on the
6th level of Loloma, which was flooded following heavy rain in 1949, '... flood water [was] just above blood heat – by thermal water'.

(my emphasis)

Compounding the high temperatures and humidity were the discomfort and health hazards resulting from exposure to particles of rock dust and noxious gases, both of which were released in large quantities during blasting. Dust was similarly manufactured underground by activities causing 'impact and friction' such as rockdrilling, shovelling, truck tipping, and the transport of ore or mullock. The physical environment for those assigned to the crushing plant and extraction process on the surface, notably the roaster, was also extremely dusty (and hot), though it was claimed that the coarse dimensions of dust released and the small numbers of men employed in these sections rendered them less hazardous. The impression of high dust concentration was allegedly exaggerated by the release of roaster fumes.

The composition of mine dust was held to be the decisive factor determining its pernicious effect on physical health and the cause of the miner's pulmonary disease commonly known as pneumoconiosis or silicosis. At the inception of mining in the colony, the widely held view of international experts was that fine particles of free silica or quartz contained in mine dust was the only cause of silicotic disease. This theory was endorsed at an International Conference on Silicosis held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1930.

Subsequent research, however, indicated that silica combined with alumina into (fibrous) silicate minerals, notably sericite, appeared to 'constitute an equal or even greater danger.' It was largely on
the basis of this view that local underground mining was charged with carrying a definite risk of silicotic disease. In 1936, a petrological examination of rock specimens taken from the Tavua gold fields revealed that although the concentration of quartz was not unduly high, sericite was present in 'very great' quantities; and that

... in view of the probable injurious effects of sericite rich mine dust on the health of miners, the mine dust of these four Fijian mines – the Emperor, Loloma, Koroere and Mt Kasi Mines – should be regarded as of a dangerous quality, and liable to induce silicosis among the miners, unless adequate preventive measures are adopted. 5

Good underground ventilation was one of the generally accepted prophylactic measures. And once the mineral composition of the Vatukoula ore bodies was established, 'the weakness of the ruling arrangements of ventilation' became quickly apparent. 6 Natural air flows, which were 'generally erratic, weak and inferior to the more costly but certain and constant flows developed mechanically,' serviced the main workings. 7 A mechanical device in the form of a '6" to 12" diameter light pipeline' provided ancillary ventilation around the working face; but because of its low pressure, the airstream – once it reached the target area – was 'liberated to mingle with dust, smoke and other gases'. Mineworkers who received the circulated flow as it was en route to the surface exit thus inhaled heavily polluted air.

Those assigned to cul-de-sac workplaces – to addits, winzes or rises – were exposed to even more dangerous levels of atmospheric impurity. It was, the Inspector of Mines (Grieve) argued in 1936
...obvious that unless an exceptionally large flow of air is utilised, or a lengthy period intervenes after blasting, the miners must return through a dangerous cloud of dusty smoke to reach the cleaner air near the face and pipe outlet. Probably more harm accrues to miners in these dusty journeys than during the balance of the shift. 8

By 1940, blasting was 'confined to crib recesses and the end of shifts' but the buoyancy of minute particles of sericitic dust meant that - in the absence of superior ventilation - the precaution was of limited value. 9

Poor ventilation exacerbated conditions of extreme humidity. This was evident from the fact that wet bulb recordings tended to be very high in underground stopes and other work places where air motion was restricted. So considerable was the condensation caused in the 'air lines' and 'receivers' that rock drilling had often to be undertaken in a thick fog. 10 The deficiency of prevailing methods of underground ventilation prompted Grieve to propose in 1936 that air be circulated '... in volumes possibly (4) or (5) times greater than has been customary practice'; that an exhaust system be introduced to prevent polluted air from being dispersed through the working areas; that fans be used to assist the air flows; and that there be strict supervision (by a qualified technician) of dust concentration and volume, air flows, and humidity. 11 He was closely attuned to the practical advantages of allocating funds to preventive health care:

Apart from the philanthropic motives, the mining companies operating in the Colony must support the introduction of preventive measures for economic reasons, in case the development of an occupational disease should scare the prevailing source of cheap labour out of the mine. 12
Although a dust count device (zeiss conimeter) was subsequently introduced, analysis of dust concentration was not especially comprehensive due to the absence of technical expertise. High atmospheric counts continued 'on occasion' to be recorded and in 1952 the group admitted that dust samples were 'never' collected. Mechanical blowers too were installed but were restricted to development ends. They appeared, in any case, to be unsatisfactory aids, their noise being added to the deafening sound of drilling, loading and other underground activities. This tended to discourage workers from using them at all. As the Inspector of Mines observed in 1940, the latter

...frequently prefer to work under humid conditions rather than with the noise of blower or such like, and, awaiting the departure of the miner in charge, will turn off or restrict the units installed for their comfort. 15

While mineworkers became a convenient scapegoat for 'bad working conditions', the deterioration in underground ventilation from the 1940's was attributable - above all - to the parsimony of their employers. With age, the mechanical fans became less efficient. It became commonplace for workers at the face to 'rush back to the shaft for air every five minutes' and fainting was not unusual. As shafts were sunk to lower levels, and new work areas opened up, a greater area was ventilated by a smaller volume of fresh air. By 1952, only three out of the six levels on the Emperor mine on which stoping or development work was undertaken, and two out of the seven levels of the Loloma mine, received fresh air flows. The upper levels (three on Emperor and five on Loloma) were ventilated with the same air which the safety officer euphemistically described as 'not significantly freshened'. On his own admission 'this amount of air [was] not entirely adequate', but the group was unwilling to
rectify this because ventilation 'could not' be substantially increased without major alterations to the system.\textsuperscript{18}

The group was more receptive to two of the other (less costly) conventional methods of dust suppression, namely wet drilling and the hosing down of work places. Both practices were of questionable efficacy. The precipitation of dust into mud by the use of water did not eradicate the dust hazard because in such high temperatures mud quickly dried and was reconstituted as dust. Hosing, on the other hand, tended to unsettle as well as to settle dust. More important, the low silica content of local ores made wet drilling an inappropriate protection against pulmonary infection: sericitic dust (which predominated) could not, like certain other dusts, be moistened. On the contrary, Grieve proposed that the introduction of water in the workplace was even 'prejudicial' to the prevention of silicosis. Not only did an increase in humidity have a debilitating effect and so reduce 'economic effort', but it exposed workers to a higher risk of pulmonary complaints like tuberculosis. This, in turn, made them more susceptible to silicosis.\textsuperscript{19}

Available evidence does not make it possible to determine the extent to which artificial humidifiers were, in fact, responsible for the contraction of tuberculosis or for the high incidence of influenza and bronchial conditions which developed at the Vatukoula mines. Because of the natural heat and humidity of the mines, workers were vulnerable to these infections for, in an attempt to keep cool, they would hose themselves down. This was done frequently throughout a shift - every five minutes according to one worker - because in such high temperatures clothes dried almost instantly.
Wet drilling increased the health hazards of a continuous process of wetting and drying. Men stood in some inches of water and had water 'blasting into [their] faces'. So did the exposure to surface temperatures at the completion of a shift because of the absence, for some years, of change houses - a standard facility offering underground workers a place to shower, change and regulate their body temperatures before going home. Men therefore 'came up wet and with no shirts on walked to their barracks.'

Influenza was consistently one of the main causes of absenteeism amongst Fijians; and on management's own admission, the delay in constructing change houses was a decisive factor. Like other infectious conditions, influenza was easily transmitted in an occupation where work was often undertaken collectively in confined spaces. In 1939, an outbreak caused the Loloma mine to close down; and on one day, 450 out of 700 Fijian workers on the Emperor mine were off sick. As much as 18% of absenteeism on the Dolphin mine in 1948 was caused by a 'mild' influenza epidemic. Epidemics were not always 'mild'; some cases developed into pneumonia; and the incidence of influenza was to rise quite drastically during the 1950's and 1960's. (see chapter seven)

Hosing down and wet drilling carried the risk of another ailment - sore feet - which was also one of the chief causes of absenteeism amongst Fijians. And as Grieve predicted, these practices were probably associated with the high incidence of hookworm amongst underground workers during the 1940's. Both conditions were preventable by wearing boots, but this essential item of protective clothing was not made available to Fijian workers until 1946 - and only then at cost.
For surface (mill) workers, there were in addition to dust exposure, the dangers associated with toxic gases which derived from the treatment process. Because of its telluride composition, it was necessary to roast the crushed underground ore at very high temperatures. It was a complicated extraction process uncommon to mining in countries where gold existed in quartz form, and released sulphur dioxide, a strong smelling and asphyxiating gas, in the process. The cyanidisation of gold, following roasting, produced hydrogen cyanide which passed as effluent through the gassing tower. 

Recording a visit of inspection over the Loloma mill in 1938, the District Commissioner Central (Caldwell) made a diary entry which was to have as much relevance forty-five years later:

very interesting but very dusty and fumes from furnaces unbearable, sulphur. 26

The inhalation of sulphurous fumes was not confined to roaster workers for, once discharged, they dispersed through other surface work areas as well as surrounding housing settlements. Workers today describe how the environmental impact of sulphur contamination was visible in the withered vegetation and food gardens as well as what was perhaps the most disturbing characteristic of the gas – the bronchial or asthmatic condition symptomatic of its toxicity. 27

Though respirators were at hand in the roaster (as a protection from dust), these had a maximum efficiency of only 50% to 80% if they fitted well. They were hot and cumbersome, and this deterred many from taking advantage of this necessary, if limited, protection. It was, the Inspector of Mines observed in 1940

In hot and humid atmospheres, which often exist normally, and in such places as the roasting section of a treatment plant, [that] the workers frequently regard the discomfort caused by perspiration, etc., as an encumbrance and prefer to work without the use of respirators provided. 28
For their part, the Vatukoula companies disclaimed the ill effects of the gas on health, conceding only that it was 'unpleasant'. They were to continue to hammer this theme during the 1950's when confronted with objections from the mineworkers' union. A bonus (of 1/6 per shift) was introduced for roaster workers but this was entirely arbitrary – paid at the discretion of the mill superintendent and depending, literally, on which way the wind was blowing. This was legitimised on the grounds that the fumes were 'not dangerous' and were indeed only 'troublesome' when both roasters were operating and the wind direction was 'wrong'.

Today, the condition is referred to, with vicarious affection, as 'the Vatukoula cough'. The companies' reassurances may be placed against the information in table 5.4.

The exposure of mill workers to cyanide in both its liquid and gaseous forms caused skin rashes, generically classified as chemical dermatitis. One particularly severe type was caused by fumes in the gassing tower. It resulted '... invariably in a painful rash on the neck, arms and parts of the face etc; and in most cases the men concerned [undergo] treatment for one or two days.' By 1951, the time lost through the affliction stirred the group into experimenting with locally made prophylactic ointments. There was some initial improvement, but on the whole the application of the ointment, the use of gloves and, later, protective suits met with only 'varying success'.

If capital was guilty of negligence, the state fell down heavily over protective legislation: regulations governing the ventilation and hygiene of surface operations were, the safety officer
TABLE 5.4

HEALTH HAZARDS OF INDUSTRIAL GASES

SULPHUR DIOXIDE

Colourless gas with a distinctive odour; somewhat soluble in water.

TOXIC BY INHALATION
IRRITATING TO SKIN, EYES AND RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Avoid inhalation of gas. TLV 5 ppm (13 mg m$^{-3}$).

Toxic effects:

The vapour irritates the respiratory system and may cause bronchitis and asphyxia. High concentrations of vapour irritate the eyes and may cause conjunctivitis.

HYDROGEN CYANIDE (hydrocyanic acid gas)

Colourless liquid or gas with faint odour of bitter almonds; bp 26°C; very soluble in water, the solution being only weakly acidic.

EXTREMELY POISONOUS GAS AND LIQUID
POISONOUS BY SKIN ABSORPTION
HIGHLY INFLAMMABLE

Prevent inhalation of gas. Prevent contact with skin and eyes. TLV (skin) 10 ppm (11 mg m$^{-3}$).

Toxic effects:

Inhalation of high concentration leads to shortness of breath, paralysis, unconsciousness, convulsions and death by respiratory failure. With lethal concentrations, death is extremely rapid although breathing may continue for some time. With low concentrations the effects are likely to be headache, vertigo, nausea and vomiting. Chronic exposure over long periods may induce fatigue and weakness. The average fatal dose is 55 mg which can also be assimilated by skin contact with the liquid.

acknowledged in 1952, comparable with those which had applied to the Queensland mining industry prior to 1936.31

The extent of respiratory or pulmonary illness amongst mineworkers cannot be accurately estimated until the 1950's. Company correspondence marked the low incidence of these complaints during the 1930's and 1940's; and the few medical examinations undertaken celebrated the absence of conventional mining disease like silicosis. But in the absence of regular and thorough examinations, such claims were highly suspect.

Along with other precautions detailed as necessary to reduce the risk of pulmonary infection, the Inspector of Mines urged in 1936 that a medical examination be made of all men before they went underground and that they be certified as 'free from any pulmonary complaint or any tendency thereto'; that 'clinical and radiological exams in search of indications of silicosis etc.' be made 'every six months for a period of approximately five years'.32

Such caution was shared by the Director of Medical Services (A.H.B. Pearce). Indeed, Pearce went even further to recommend the (radiological and clinical) examination of all 'Natives' and Europeans who were to be engaged in the 'actual mining and crushing of the ore'; that there be obligatory certification of physical fitness (specifying absence from pulmonary disease); that periodical re-examinations be made compulsory; and that suitable medical facilities including X-ray equipment be installed and operated at the group's expense.33 A Colonial Office despatch the following year also marked the necessity of an X-ray plant to assist in the diagnosis of silicosis,34 but this was not done and comprehensive
The first search for evidence of pulmonary and industrial diseases and the first attempt to estimate the 'influence of mine working conditions upon pulmonary complaints to which the native community is particularly susceptible' were carried out between October and December 1939. The investigation was unsatisfactory in a number of ways: it involved only 48% of the associated companies' workforce and 35% of the mining industry, and did not include all the operating mines in the area. Selection based on random sampling was an unreliable method of medical assessment because the survey thereby included workers of very short term and broken service, examined only a proportion of underground miners and, with the exception of nine, excluded Europeans, many of whom had had several years of employment on other, mainly Australian, mines.

Pulmonary disease of the type and severity under investigation took years to manifest itself; and in 1939, mining at Emperor, the largest of the three mines, was still predominantly surface. Underground workings topped no more than about 500 feet. Further, in spite of the advice of local administrative officers and the Colonial Office, none of the workers included in the survey had been radiologically examined on engagement.

Consequently, although 35 Fijians - representing about 5% of the total number and 9.4% of underground (Fijian) workers examined - were diagnosed as having tuberculosis or severe bronchestasia, or were considered sufficiently ill to require transfer to surface work, it could not be proved that infection had been contracted at
the mines. Nearly 70% of the 23 Fijians afflicted with tuberculosis had been employed underground, but against this it was claimed that over half had not been working for more than a year; and of those with longer terms, some had not been engaged exclusively underground and others had histories of high turnover. It was concluded that...

...the incidence of tuberculosis amongst mine workers, viz., 33 per 1,000 persons employed, is probably no higher, and may quite well be lower, than the incidence of tuberculosis amongst the Fijian race as a whole, though this is purely surmise since no actual figures on the general incidence are available. 37

The chest expansion of 691 Fijians measured and weighed during the survey was also 'exceedingly low with an average of 2½'. Medical opinion did not, however, regard this as a measure 'of any constitutional weakness', but preferred to see it as a function of inherent physiological differences between Fijians and Europeans, enabling the former to use less physical exertion to perform heavy manual work. The argument was highly speculative, but more important, it reflected and in turn legitimised a colonial ideology which prescribed for indigenous labour a crucial (and essentially manual) role in the economy. 'Generally speaking', it was deduced, 'the physical build and stamina of the native Fijian are such that he is well suited to industrial work, a point which is borne out in observations and the results forthcoming from their employment in the Mining Industry.' 38

Behind the expressed doubts about the industrial propensity of pulmonary disease lay the structural characteristics of the mine labour market, the perennial myth that Fijian wage employment was discretionary, and the alleged 'inherent pulmonary weakness of the non-European mineworker'. The Inspector of Mines conceded that '...arduous [underground] work in warm humid conditions' would
'probably accentuate existing tuberculous infection' but claimed that

...any increased liability to tuberculosis due to mining occupation is largely countered by the open air and uncrowded living conditions on the mining fields and by virtue of the facts disclosed regarding the intermittent employment periods of those found to be infected; the absence of any acute economic necessity or incentive for a Fijian to continue working for a livelihood when feeling unwell is probably largely responsible for the intermittent nature of the employment of the tuberculous persons since the Fijian knows that his communal system is there to be fallen back on'.

It was a bitter irony that labour turnover should be presented not as incriminating evidence of the health perils of mining but as a means of health protection. And as section II shows, 'uncrowded living conditions' simply did not exist.

The colony's Director of Mines and others adopted a more cautious stand. If the report did dispel the fear of silicosis, it was still advisable to hold health surveys annually 'if for no other reason than to "weed out" the TB cases and so safeguard healthy workers'. This was not done and the government imposed no legal obligations on capital to carry out the recommendations of health, and mining officers.

Other factors militated against the diagnosis of the disease in these early years. The symptoms of silicosis, its slow, accumulative pattern, and its close association with tuberculosis hampered easy detection. This was especially so given the rudimentary and largely clinical training of local medical practitioners working at the mines' dispensary and the lack of radiological equipment at their disposal. Simple or uncomplicated silicosis was not infective and 'rarely fatal'; it was tuberculosis.
that was the cause of both the contagion and death of most silicotics. During its early stages, the disease was evident only in 'a shortness of breath', a condition which in the circumstances might have been incorrectly diagnosed as an ordinary bronchial condition. Only after some years of continued dust inhalation would a worker become incapacitated or die. If local doctors tending to non-European mineworkers were ignorant of the symptoms and peculiarities of this unfamiliar industrial disease, the implications are startling: from the early 1950's, reported bronchial cases (classified as clinical conditions) were to run into the thousands each year. (see chapter seven)

A number of other factors, while diminishing the risks of silicosis, would also have disguised the extent to which the demands of production took an early toll on the physical health of mine labour. Notable amongst these were the mobility of the mine labour market, the group's policy of dismissing and sending home sick workers, and the reluctance of Fijians to report to the mines' dispensary and instead to return home to their villages when unwell.

Despite its illegality under colonial rule, luveniwai vaka viti or traditional healers and medicine were also sought by many Fijians in preference to going to hospital, known as vale ni mate or house of death. At least until the late 1940's, when with the aid of the local police, management launched an aggressive campaign 'to unearth the activities of ... employees who were engaging themselves in the practice of witchcraft and Bush medicine', to dismiss all those found administering or receiving this, and to prosecute the 'doctors', it was relatively easy for workers and their families to maintain this clandestine habit. In the case of tuberculosis
surveys which did not prescribe treatment (as in 1940), Fijians were even less likely to offer themselves for medical examination at the dispensary. As the Assistant Medical Officer of the colony's largest hospital (the Colonial War Memorial in Suva) admitted though doing much good scientifically, [such a survey] tends to do considerable harm in that it tends to alienate the native population from any Medical Officer, endeavouring to investigate tuberculosis. 46

The penalties for being sick - dismissal, transfer to lower paying surface work or the withdrawal of wages - did not necessarily promote labour turnover and so reduce the dangers of pulmonary infection. Quite the reverse, they probably encouraged many, particularly those with families to support, to continue to work rather than declare an illness or return home. Reporting to the dispensary ran the risk of forfeiting the only means of supplementing rations, buying clothes and paying school fees.

Through the 1940's, the susceptibility of mineworkers to pulmonary conditions increased. Open-cut mining gave way to more underground stoping on Emperor, all three mines deepened, and the migrant system was steadily replaced by a more stabilised workforce. The four-weekly accounts of sick pay granted to European, half-caste, Indian and Rotuman workers between 1949 and 1950 provide a telling comment on the extent to which pulmonary and respiratory complaints were becoming an occupational reality. Aside from influenza and gastroenteritis/dysentery, it was cases of bronchial congestion and catarrh, fibrositis, tracheobronchitis and pulmonary congestion which recurred with awesome regularity. 47

Yet, left largely to company discretion, medical examinations remained sporadic affairs involving only sections of the workforce.
Management continued to argue that because of the 'semi-intermittent' nature of a large proportion of their workforce, '... routine examinations as conducted amongst more stable mining communities [lost] much of their value'. And on this dubious pretext, only men of long service (ten years) were periodically subjected to clinical tests. Only 'suspicious' chest cases - those giving obvious signs of pulmonary complications - were x-rayed. For shorter term workers, there was little prospect of examination unless a health problem came to the attention of medical staff and then this was usually due to the workers' own initiative.

This being so, it is still possible to discern a change in managerial attitudes towards occupational health (like safety) from the late 1940's. A greater concern to reduce the high rate of sickness derived largely from the declining mobility of Fijian labour and recognition of the economic advantages of maintaining a reasonably healthy workforce. The comprehensive medical survey of 1950, the introduction of pre-engagement examinations in 1951, and the more systematic collection of data relating to illnesses which followed, were an important measure of this new thinking.

Until 1946, however, there existed no legislation which acknowledged the health hazards of industrial occupations, specified the nature and types of occupational illness, or determined an employer's liability in cases where a worker's illness or death was caused by his working (or living) conditions. It was something of a paradox that the dangers of silicosis should be recognised by public health laws as early as 1935, but that labour or mining legislation should fail to acknowledge this disease or to extend to mineworkers the right of compensation.
Occupational health, unlike safety, was not moreover an issue that had a history of metropolitan interest or pressure. Circulating a revised model ordinance (East and West Africa) around 1937/8, the Colonial Office in fact rejected the calls for compensation legislation in respect of occupational disease, arguing that

...there is reason to believe that, if such provisions were included, insurance rates would be substantially higher than would otherwise be considered necessary, for the reason that there is at present almost a complete absence of any effective regulations, such as have been found to be necessary in this country, designed to minimize the risk of the contraction of such diseases. It is therefore considered that in Colonies where there are industries in which occupational diseases may be contracted the question of the introduction of the appropriate regulations is one which requires very careful consideration, and that in the meantime it would be inadvisable to place employers under a statutory liability to pay compensation in respect of such diseases. 51

The major business interests represented in a Fiji committee appointed in 1940 to review draft legislation for workers' compensation, were not about to contest this view. It was, they concluded, 'wisest' not to include any kind of occupational disease. 52 Five years later - some fifteen years after indigenous labour had been drawn into the mining industry - statutory recognition was given to occupational health risks. Even then, there were two conspicuous deficiencies in the amended legislation of 1946.

First, of the numerous diseases commonly linked with mine work - silicosis, pneumoconiosis, tuberculosis, subcutaneous cellulitis of the hand, knee and elbow, sulphur poisoning, nystagmus, and ankylostomiasis - only the first was specified. Second, in order to claim damages, a worker had to have been employed at the mines within 12 months of becoming incapacitated or dying from the
disease. As noted above, death resulting from silicosis might not occur for many years; and given medical ignorance and the many reasons that deterred workers from reporting sickness and dictated a preference for the sanctuary of the village in times of serious illness, the legislation offered little real protection. More important, it was tuberculosis which was the actual cause of death and this was not listed as an occupational disease. 53

Urging the adoption of comprehensive legislation which would draw together the often convoluted strands of separate regulations under one Accidents and Occupational Diseases (Notification) Ordinance, the Home Office circulated another model ordinance amongst Britain's colonies in 1950. 54 The local medical department welcomed the initiative, convinced that it would improve the control of health and accident hazards that were already apparent:

Unless insistence on improvement in matters related to occupational health follows closely on the growth of the community it will become increasingly difficult to introduce necessary legislation later on. 55

Against this, a defensive stand was taken by the Commissioner of Labour (Reay) and others in the colonial secretariat. Existing legislation, namely the 1935 Public Health Ordinance and the 1947 Labour Ordinance, they argued, afforded industrial and factory workers adequate protection. There was already the handicap of an understaffed bureaucracy; and besides, the legislation might prove 'irritating' to the colony's employers. 56

If, as Reay intimated, the model ordinance was politically sensitive, it was certainly not redundant. Existing public health and labour legislation was no real substitute. Section 86 of the Labour Ordinance detailed only the medical procedure to be followed
in cases of suspected occupational disease and specified the legal obligations on an employer and medical practitioner to report the same. Section 58 of the Public Health Ordinance, on the other hand, merely gave local authorities powers of inspection and a mandate to identify and to take action against overcrowding, insanitary conditions, poor ventilation and other health hazards. The law thus dealt essentially with the prevention and control of disease. Further, the third schedule of the model ordinance proposed a range of 'mining' afflictions only one of which — silicosis — was recognised in the colony as an industrial and therefore compensatable disease. 57

The government's rejection of the model ordinance on the grounds that it was not 'necessary in the present stage of development of this Colony' could thus scarcely be justified. 58 And with his advice to the secretariat given in anticipation of the enactment of factories legislation, Reay was again mistaken: when the Factories Bill finally passed through both councils in 1957, it excluded the mining industry. 59
Facilitated by the abundance of Fijian labour and the contract system of short term employment, a strategy of controlled expenditure in occupational safety also helped to maintain the low cost structure of local mine labour. Underground bosses' meetings began late in 1944 to discuss safety problems and company policy; but no systematic collection or analysis of accident data or any organised work in accident prevention were conducted at Vatukoula before 1946. When in that year a safety officer was appointed and a programme drawn up, attention was directed exclusively at the Emperor mine and underground departments. Only in 1950 did the campaign embrace the Loloma and Dolphin mines and surface working areas such as the mill.

While government mining officials hailed the group's exemplary record of safety, the grave consequences of this negligence were visible in the injuries mineworkers sustained on the job. Frequency and severity accident rates were high and the incidence of hand and foot injuries alarming. The steady transition to deep level mining bequeathed greater dangers, but was overshadowed as a cause of a deteriorating safety record by a number of other factors: the restricted access mineworkers had to essential items of protective clothing, the absence of formal (technical) training, and - during the war - the poor quality of supervision at a time when efforts to improve productivity as a way of offsetting general labour shortages were being intensified. Accidents caused by falls and slides of rock for example - a major cause of accidents during the 1930's and 1940's - generally resulted from inadequate inspection of work.
A critical influence on the severity rate was the poor medical assistance available at Vatukoula because treatment to a large extent determined the speed of recovery. Increasing pressure on neighbouring rural hospitals led to accident, like disease, cases often being discharged prematurely. The problem was a vexing one for management - not to mention the victims themselves - for obvious reasons. In the case of foot and leg injuries in particular, the practice led to '...delayed recovery, an increased severity rate, protracted compensation payments and in some cases a higher degree of incapacity [sic].'

The shortage of government personnel qualified to control mining operations and to regulate working practices and conditions in accordance with the colony's broadly defined mining law contributed to the indifference with which the group regarded its legal obligations. In December 1934, it drew the embarrassed confession of the Mining Board chairman that

Until some competent person, having practical knowledge of mining and the management of mines is appointed, the Board and the Government will pull the Mining Coach in 'blinkers'.

Even after an Inspector of Mines was recruited in 1935, the infrequency of his visits meant that District Officers, bereft of the necessary expertise, continued to inspect machinery and workplaces and to conduct accident enquiries.

In such circumstances, particularly in cases where a unilateral representation of senior company officials and European miners was permitted, it was hardly surprising that investigating officers
should repeatedly find the companies innocent of any offence against the mining regulations. An accident enquiry in 1937 in which a Fijian miner lost an eye demonstrated this clearly. An underground manager, a mine manager and the District Commissioner offered the unanimous verdict that although the man had not been provided with protective eye shields, the injury was accidentally caused through a small scat of stone flying from a rock which was being spalled into his eye. This is a common occurrence and no blame can be attached to anybody. 8

It was not only before the war, when the industry was still in its infancy, that ill-supervised enquiries of this kind were permitted. For a period of twelve years between 1937 when the colony's second Inspector of Mines (White) was appointed and August 1949, not a single enquiry was held by the Inspector of Mines into (non-fatal) serious accidents. The companies were obliged only to submit 'brief accounts' of all serious accidents. 9 In March 1949, a fatal accident was investigated by only the District Commissioner Western assisted by two miners. It would have been 'helpful', the officer noted, to have had the assistance of the Mines' Inspector. 10 Later, between 1952 and 1953, inspections and accident enquiries were in the (part-time) hands of a government geologist. This provoked an angry attack on the government by one member of the Legislative Council:

We had the other day that farcical business of the inquiry at Vatukoula where we had to have as assessors members of the mining companies over there to give their opinion. It would not be tolerated in any other part of the world. 11

While official enquiries - including those conducted by qualified inspectors - tended to vindicate the group of any charge of criminal
negligence, the administration also pandered to its reluctance to provide workers with protective clothing. The mining regulations empowered the Inspector of Mines to stipulate items of clothing and equipment necessary for the safety and health of underground workers but no requirements were specified or enforced. The government was not oblivious to the consequences of this. In 1935, the Chairman of the Mining Board was advised by the Inspector of Mines that on two inspections he had seen beer bottles lying around where 'barefooted' Fijians worked. Subsequent observations and the group's own reports confirmed that serious foot injuries were common occurrences.

Foot, like other, injuries quickly became infected particularly when living conditions were unhygienic and the working environment underground was hot and wet. There was thus a high incidence of septic wounds though management attested that culpability lay with the workers themselves because of their failure to get injuries treated. The verdict of an enquiry into the case of a poisoned foot in 1939 echoed official approval for this extraordinary claim. It was considered irrelevant that the worker had not been wearing boots; the infection was caused by

...his own neglect in not receiving treatment immediately after treading upon a cross-cut saw.

The rising incidence of lost-time accidents was ultimately inimical to the accumulation of mining capital, and the strategy of low level investment in safety care thus counterproductive. The collective costs of injury treatment, lost labour time, and compensation (including wages and rations) paid to unproductive workers inflated the overall cost of labour. The safety programme initiated in 1946
and expanded through the late 1940's and early 1950's reflected this rationalisation. 'Accidents', it was bluntly put, 'cost money'.

Aimed at making the workforce more 'safety conscious', the programme pushed educational propaganda in addition to collecting and analysing accident data. A 'safety slogan' competition, the display of safety posters, the introduction of first aid training and the reorganisation of first aid facilities, the payment of safety bonuses to leading hand miners with 'clean' records, and the use of a public address system for safety bulletins, were the most important forms this took.16

Other measures were directed more conspicuously at improving productivity and eliminating illegitimate claims for compensation. 'Malingering' became a prime target; and in 1950, underground employees were examined for deformities and old injuries (as well as for chest conditions) with a view to identifying those of retarded efficiency and to pre-empting any attempt by the injured or sick to 'exploit' their conditions 'dishonestly'. Treatment at the mines dispensary became compulsory; the safety officer checked every case that involved treatment; and 'an example was made of anyone who did not obey instructions.'17

The success of the campaign and specifically its financial benefits were amply demonstrated in the marked decline in frequency/severity rates and compensation payments between 1946 and 1953. (see tables 5.5 to 5.11) A striking omission though was its failure to promote the use of protective clothing and equipment. It was not to be until the late 1960's that this was to be done.
### TABLE 5.5
SEVERITY AND FREQUENCY ACCIDENT RATES
EGM CO LTD, MINING DEPT, 1946 - 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended</th>
<th>Shifts Worked</th>
<th>Shifts Lost</th>
<th>% Severity Rate</th>
<th>Lost Time Accidents</th>
<th>Frequency Rate</th>
</tr>
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<td>39</td>
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### TABLE 5.6
SEVERITY AND FREQUENCY ACCIDENT RATES,
EGM CO LTD, SURFACE DEPTS,
(INCLUDING TAVUA POWER PROPRIETARY LTD), 1946 - 1953

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<th>Year Ended</th>
<th>Shifts Worked</th>
<th>Shifts Lost</th>
<th>% Severity Rate</th>
<th>Lost Time Accidents</th>
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<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>161,917</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>236,396</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>217,246</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5.7
SEVERITY AND FREQUENCY ACCIDENT RATES,
LOLOMA (FIJI) GOLD MINES N.L., 1946 - 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended</th>
<th>Shifts Worked</th>
<th>Shifts Lost</th>
<th>% Severity Rate</th>
<th>Lost Time Accidents</th>
<th>Frequency Rate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1946</td>
<td>37,208</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>33,574</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>34,752</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>34,163</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>30,923</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>30,588</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>29,120</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>25,406</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 5.8
COMPENSATION PAYMENTS/RATES, EGM CO LTD, MINING DEPARTMENT, 1946 - 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended June</th>
<th>Shifts Worked</th>
<th>Actual Compensation Paid on Shifts Lost (£.s.d)</th>
<th>Compensation Rate Per 1000 Manshifts (£.s.d)</th>
<th>Compensation Rate Adjusted To Rise in Costs &amp; Wages (£.s.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>74,986</td>
<td>185.18. 7</td>
<td>2,477</td>
<td>2,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>114,284</td>
<td>150.11. 5</td>
<td>1,317</td>
<td>1,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>122,352</td>
<td>192.7.11</td>
<td>1,579</td>
<td>1,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>122,015</td>
<td>137.9. 7</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>114,922</td>
<td>127. 1. 1</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>145,456</td>
<td>184.17. 4</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>154,392</td>
<td>135.16. 1</td>
<td>882</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>177,231</td>
<td>171.12. 7</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5.9
COMPENSATION PAYMENTS/RATES, EGM CO LTD, SURFACE DEPTS, (INCLUDING TAVUA POWER PROPRIETARY LIMITED), 1946 - 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended June</th>
<th>Shifts Worked</th>
<th>Actual Compensation Paid on Shifts Lost (£.s.d)</th>
<th>Compensation Rate Per 1000 Manshifts (£.s.d)</th>
<th>Compensation Rate Adjusted To Rise in Costs &amp; Wages (£.s.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>148,440</td>
<td>154. 6. 1</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>1,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>165,216</td>
<td>194.18. 0</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>1,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>180,893</td>
<td>150.18. 5</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>149,230</td>
<td>156. 8. 9</td>
<td>1,048</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>170,578</td>
<td>181. 5. 0</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>161,917</td>
<td>218.13. 7</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>236,396</td>
<td>188. 2. 6</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>217,246</td>
<td>143. 4. 3</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5.10
COMPENSATION PAYMENTS/RATES, LOLOMA (FIJI) GOLD MINES N.L., 1946 - 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Ended June</th>
<th>Shifts Worked</th>
<th>Actual Compensation Paid on Shifts Lost (£.s.d)</th>
<th>Compensation Rate Per 1000 Manshifts (£.s.d)</th>
<th>Compensation Rate Adjusted To Rise in Costs &amp; Wages (£.s.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>37,208</td>
<td>32. 5. 1</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>33,574</td>
<td>37. 5. 0</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>34,752</td>
<td>25. 8.11</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>34,163</td>
<td>132.18. 1</td>
<td>3,889</td>
<td>2,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>30,923</td>
<td>159.15. 3</td>
<td>5,166</td>
<td>3,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>30,588</td>
<td>128. 6. 4</td>
<td>4,194</td>
<td>2,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>29,120</td>
<td>27. 3. 3</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>25,406</td>
<td>9. 6.10</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Ended June</td>
<td>Shifts Worked</td>
<td>Actual Compensation Paid on Shifts Lost Includes Rations and Hospital Fees, etc (£.s.d)</td>
<td>Compensation Rate Adjusted To Rise in Costs &amp; Wages (£)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>17,621</td>
<td>10.10. 7</td>
<td>595</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>21,571</td>
<td>110. 7.11</td>
<td>4,979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>25,521</td>
<td>212.14. 8</td>
<td>5,944</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>23,090</td>
<td>132. 5.11</td>
<td>3,774</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>20,960</td>
<td>105. 9. 5</td>
<td>2,979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>25,294</td>
<td>126. 6. 3</td>
<td>2,564</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>23,577</td>
<td>14.18.11</td>
<td>314</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>18,578</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The compensation rate is calculated as follows:

Money expended in interim compensation payments, Rations, Housing, Medical Expenses during the time the injured employees are not working or until a lump sum settlement is made \( \times 1,000 \)

**MANSHTIFS**

Compensation rates were adjusted to the percentage rise in wages, etc.

Source: Safety Officer, R.H. Yarrow, 'A Brief History of Organised Safety Work on the Vatukoula Goldfield, together with an Indication of the Costs involved and the Benefits Gained', 19.11.53, Vat/.
The recognised liability of frequent and serious foot injuries, however, made the supply of boots one exception. It was acknowledged that there

..will always be sharp stones in stopes and development headings, and in the open cut. Also barefoot truckers must, sooner or later, stub their toes on sleepers, ends of rails etc. The only direct protection to the feet for the majority of accidents is boots. 18

In the absence of any legal specifications, the companies could, with impunity, insist that mineworkers pay for their own boots. In 1947, a pair of surplus army boots (which were not really satisfactory) cost 21/-, while regulation safety boots (hob-nailed, steel-plated and toe-capped) varied between 27/- and 29/- in 1948.19 This was more than the basic weekly wage for Fijian workers and many - for what were more than likely financial reasons - chose to go without boots.

For those who agreed to have the cost of a pair deducted from their wages, shortages of supply offered little consolation if in the meantime they fell prey to accidents. A high rate of foot injuries indeed persisted and by 1950 had increased 'substantially'.20 Although supervisors continued to castigate injured workers for their carelessness, it was admitted that

many of you and your men will blame the lack of boots for this and, to a great extent, you would be correct. 21

Hand injuries were also recurrent but the issue of gloves remained restricted.22 Further, in 1948, the companies reduced their orders and distributed them only to platemen, bracemen, and to 'those who already had hand injuries.' For other workers, including underground truckers, the message was an unsympathetic one:
Those of you who placed so much reliance on gloves for the protection of your hands must now depend more upon increased personal care and forethought in your work. 23

As the incidence of hand injuries also climbed 'substantially', management acknowledged that shortages were again the main problem. It did not intend to opt for the obvious solution, resorting instead to the familiar practice of rebuking its workers:

Gloves would, in the majority of cases, have reduced the risk of injury, but they would not have prevented the accidents from occurring. The true cause of a hand accident does not originate in the wearing of a pair of gloves, but in the carelessness and thoughtlessness of the men concerned, be it the injured man himself, his mate, his leading hand or his junior boss.

We have told you in recent broadcasts to be prepared to work without gloves, because gloves are in short supply, and at present too expensive to issue to everybody. 24

Ranking behind accidents to feet and hands were injuries sustained to the eyes - commonly by flying scats and splashed chemicals, particularly lime. The issue of eyeshields - compulsory equipment for all except office workers in many of the large American and Canadian mines - was confined to only a few occupations (engineering for example) and even then not distributed to all workers. 25 It was not to be before the early 1960's that they were to be issued 'on a limited scale to certain underground employees'; and that the persistently high rate of injuries from scats, some of which led to permanent damage to vision, would prompt the call for their supply to 'persons engaged in breaking rocks and grizzlies, cutting hitches and collaring holes.' 26

While capital ignored such fundamental requirements of industrial safety, it also made little effort to promote technical or formal
training. In the early years this was popularly regarded as of little value, and experience - or learning on the job - was projected as the most important method of ensuring safe working habits. It was an attitude that was largely influenced by the inflationary effect that a system of apprenticeship would have on the cost of labour. Without the formal recognition of competence or skills, wage rates were entirely at company discretion. Labour surpluses, the migrant system, and the contribution the village economy could be called upon to make in restoring to health injured, like sick, Fijian workers, made it both irrational and unnecessary to provide formal training.

By the end of the war, however, circumstances were quite different. As noted in earlier chapters, the occupational mobility of local labour - specifically the displacement of European tradesmen and junior supervisors by half-castes, Rotumans and, to a lesser extent, Fijians - as well as the greater stabilisation of Fijian labour, were being promoted in order to reduce labour costs and to meet the changing needs of production. In response to these developments, new attitudes to training, though not to formal apprenticeship, emerged. Further, with safety standards declining, the quality of supervision could be perceived as critical not only to improving productivity but to any efforts to reduce the amount of time and capital lost through industrial accidents.

The group therefore responded warmly to a government proposal in 1947 that 'practically' oriented classes in mechanical engineering, mining practice, safety and first aid, milling and ore treatment, electricity, and carpentry and construction, be introduced, especially since it did not have to bear the cost of these.
programme was, moreover, to be very selective: the milling course, for example, was intended for 'boss boys' and some 'leading men'; and the mining and drilling course mainly for underground shift bosses and drill crews. The vast majority of Fijians was thus excluded. One unintended feature of the scheme, however, was the erratic attendance of the selected Fijians and half-castes. The reasons for this were not obscure. Classes were held only in the evening - outside working hours for day shift workers and out of bounds for those on the evening or night shifts - and subscribers had to pay 10/- a term for the privilege of a once weekly course of instruction.

Accident Liability and the Matter of Compensation

The introduction in 1940 of industrial legislation designed to extend financial compensation to workers who sustained injuries during the course of their employment was a direct response to pressure from the Colonial Office to adopt the reforms of an international labour convention. But 11 years spanned the metropolitan initiative and its application in Fiji, and this did not simply reflect the delays or mismanagement of the administrative machinery: the unpalatable spectre of statutory labour protection which would at once raise the cost and the political consciousness of local workers drew little praise from the colony's largest employers. And, indeed, through their political representatives - Scott and Hedstrom - who were appointed to a legislative committee set up to consider compensation legislation in 1930, the dominant economic forces were able to retard the introduction, reduce the scope, and modify the terms of this as well as other industrial reforms.
Insisting that they were '...voicing the views of the public and the Elected Members when they say that they are definitely opposed to this class of legislation', the two unofficial members protested that the legislation was 'so unnecessary and misconceived [sic] in a Colony like Fiji'. This was largely because of the structural changes in the sugar industry, notably the switch from plantation wage labour to tenant farming. Behind their sober submissions, a virulent note of warning was struck: if the Governor was directed to introduce the legislation 'then every constitutional step will be taken to oppose such a Bill'.

In their own defence, the CSR and later the mining companies outlined the medical benefits and financial compensation which they extended, under no legal compulsion, to their workers. But there were important differences between their de facto systems and the terms on which they became liable under the law. Before 1940, compensation paid to mineworkers was discretionary, racially distinct and discriminatory. In the absence of a standardised scale of awards, discretion was exercised in favour of Europeans and half-castes; these two racial groups alone were unconditionally insured against accidents. By contrast, only (indentured) married Fijians with their wives at the mines, and those Fijians who earned more than the minimum rate were guaranteed compensation for disability or death arising out of accidents. Single men or those on the basic rates - around 55% of the Fijian workforce - could entertain only the hope that ex gratia awards would be made to their families (in the case of fatalities) or to themselves (where injuries were not fatal).
A number of accidents during the 1930's demonstrated the effects of an arbitrary system of racial preference. In 1937, a Fijian underground trucker whose lacerated and fractured toe was partially amputated on admission to hospital, received only half pay for the month and ten days during which he was unable to work. The accident was declared 'trivial' and resulting in 'no incapacitation whatsoever'. Another Fijian who lost his right eye received a lump sum of £10 and about £10 in wages and holiday; while two years earlier, an injured European was paid two-thirds of his weekly wages for six months even though he was believed to have been 'too drunk to know what he was doing'.

The limits placed on Fijian compensation were, like their low wages, rationalised on the grounds that the traditional economy and social system would succour the injured. In the group's summation, the distinction between a married worker accompanied by his wife and one who was not, or was single, reflected his permanent or casual status. Discrimination in favour of married men was thus defended in the spurious belief that they relinquished their rights and obligations to their villages when they became permanent workers. It was a simplistic and misleading perspective on traditional social relations but behind it there lay a crude economic logic. In the event of a married worker dying, Theodore claimed, his wife and family have, in a real sense, lost their breadwinner. In the case of a Fijian whose family remain in their own koro and retain their full communal rights, or in the case of a Fijian who is single, their deaths are not so serious a deprivation to their relatives; and the smaller amount of compensation which, under the mining companies' scheme, would be allotted in such cases would be considered quite adequate.
The redistributive and communal principles of village life, then, offered the ideological defence as well as the practical means by which this cost variable of Fijian mine labour was kept extremely low. It was little wonder that Theodore should urge in 1938 that any proposed law in this Colony relating to compensation for industrial accidents should be considered with full regard to the peculiar situation of the Fijian worker, and especially of his rights and immunities under his communal system. 40

His integrity in distinguishing between permanent and casual workers was questionable for another reason. Quite apart from evidence demonstrating the strong social ties (and therefore economic obligations) which Fijians retained with their home districts, the group's own policy of making housing a condition of service determined that the wife of a deceased worker would almost certainly return home to her village.

A eurocentric definition of dependency reduced the cost of Fijian compensation still further. In 1938, two Fijian miners, Filimoni Nukurama of Bau, Tailevu, and Filimoni Lasaro of Nagigi, Cakaudrove, were fatally injured. On the basis of 30 months earnings, the maximum compensation payable in each case was calculated to be £141 and £159. The amounts actually awarded totalled only £95/10/- and £53. In Nukurama's case, £70 was given to his three year old daughter being cared for by his wife's relatives and £25 to his wife, a leprosy patient hospitalised on the island of Makogai; his wife's four other 'illegitimate' children and an aging father were excluded. Official investigations into Lasaro's case revealed his immediate dependants to be his mother, sister and brother but, because of their ages (20 and 19 years), his sister and brother were disqualified. An award of £53 was accordingly assessed on the basis of only one-third of the maximum amount payable. 41
State involvement in these and like affairs did not end with its own misguided criteria of dependency and the paltry compensation payments which it sanctioned. District Officers also controlled the use of compensation for they were sometimes required to administer trust accounts on behalf of dependants. That Nukurama's wife should choose to give her award to her family because her five children and father were in need of food and clothing was considered a breach of official procedure and control. Efforts were accordingly made to recover the money. 42

Before 1940, the liability of the mining companies was itself very limited. Compensation was tied to proven negligence or neglect by an employer and paid in full only in cases of total negligence. A reduced payment was extended if the worker was partly responsible for his injury; and no gesture at all made if an accident was judged to have occurred as a result of his 'neglect of safety regulations' or his 'serious and wilful misconduct'. 43

The frequency with which accident enquiries found mineworkers culpable in spite of the deficiencies in supervision and training, and the absence of protective clothing, was thus a critical determinant of low compensation payments. Commenting on an accident that occurred in 1937, in which a Fijian lost the fingers of his left hand, the Inspector of Mines contrasted the amount of compensation that would have been paid had the company been found negligent (£25-£40) and the amount the worker actually received (£13/12/-) because of his own 'neglect'. 44

The iniquity of ad hoc arrangements made between employers and their workers — and by implication the racial formula of compensation —
was acknowledged by the Secretary for Native Affairs (Wright) as early as 1934. It was probable, he argued:

...that some injured employees and some dependents of employees killed in the performance of their duties are awarded higher compensation than others, whose cases are equally worthy of consideration or even more so.

Indian members of the Legislative Council also stressed the need for official intervention; and in September 1936, a resolution of the Council of Chiefs impelled the government to

...consider the question of making legal provision whereby natives employed in gold mines be insured against accident or death.

It was a significant political event not only because this prestigious forum should lobby on behalf of Fijian mine labour but that it publicised the dangers of mine work and the existing injustice of uncompensated accident victims.

By the late 1930's, there was still strong opposition to the introduction of compensation legislation. The CSR in particular remained uncompromising. A second committee appointed in 1939 to consider the Model (East and West Africa) Ordinance demonstrated through its composition and adopted recommendations that the colonial government had no intention of sacrificing the interests of capital. A systematic and binding schedule of higher awards was established but concessions to injured workers were visibly tailored to meet these. Indeed, the draft bill of 1940 was introduced on the declared premise that

the burden must be made one which can be borne by the industries of the Colony. It must not be one which will tend in any way to affect adversely the industries of the Colony...

[The compensation rates]...must be made reasonable so that the rates of insurance which the employer would have to pay are not too high...
In the case of death and permanent total incapacity, the committee proposed that the recommended (maximum) compensation be reduced from 30 and 42 months to 24 and 30 months respectively. The ordinance in its final enacted form was rather more generous, largely due to the tenacity of Indian council members like Said Hasan, Vishnu Deo and C. Chattur Singh. Compensation payable to permanently incapacitated workers was, nonetheless, fixed at 36 not 42 months' earnings on the grounds that this was 'more commensurate with the economic conditions of this Colony'.

Although an employer was now obliged to compensate an injured worker 'irrespective of negligence' unless the injury was attributable to the latter's 'serious and wilful misconduct', his liability was circumscribed by other means. Any injury which did not incapacitate a worker for at least a week was not compensatable; and if fatal or serious accidents were found to have resulted from a worker's misconduct, such cases could not be referred for judicial review, a protection specified under the model ordinance. Further, the crude, utilitarian definition of disability was to permit this extraordinary anomaly some years later:

While the man's arm is admittedly a bit bent the medical officers at present consider that will not cause any disability and that the arm is quite able to be used fully...

One of the declared objects of the model ordinance was that 'natives' and 'non-natives' should be treated together and that differential rates of maximum compensation as some of the African colonies requested (and like the Fiji mining companies applied until then) should, for political reasons, be abolished. The opinion of the Secretary of State was
...that in legislation of this kind, any provisions which would give the appearance of racial discrimination should be avoided, and that there should be only one Ordinance in each territory applying both to non-natives and to natives. 54

If it succeeded in avoiding the 'appearance' of discrimination, the legislation adopted in the colony made little difference to the continuing practice of racial preference. The calculation of compensation on the basis of earnings obviated the need for an explicitly racial index of accident insurance; and the death or incapacitating injuries of Fijian, half-caste and European mineworkers — even where they shared the same job — thus continued to be evaluated differently.

Payments to Fijians in particular remained disproportionately low (see table 5.12), while incredible cases such as the following — for which the group was not liable — were still permitted. A Fijian miner pinned to the ground by a capsized underground truck in 1947 died on admission to the mines' dispensary. The cause of death was pronounced 'heart failure'. Another worker, aged only 43 years, collapsed and died whilst pushing an underground truck down the Loloma mine four years later. A post mortem found his death to have resulted from 'natural causes'. 55

As for standardising maximum rates of compensation — £500 for death and £750 for permanent total incapacity — the legislation made even less impact on the practice of discrimination because low wage earners were not eligible for them. 56 Nor did the ceiling payable under the ordinance prevent the group from paying higher rates to its European workers and staff. 57
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Nature of Accident</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Days Absent</th>
<th>Compensation (£.s.d)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Labourer (ug)</td>
<td>25% permanent disability</td>
<td>19.8.46</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>58.10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Miner (ug)</td>
<td>Fractured spine, rock fall</td>
<td>14.12.46</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>128.17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Labourer (mill)</td>
<td>Lacerated toe</td>
<td>26.2.47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Labourer (grass cutting)</td>
<td>Punctured foot - septic</td>
<td>15.3.47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Simple fracture, left leg</td>
<td>21.3.47</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>9.17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Motor mechanic</td>
<td>Lacerated wound on frontal region</td>
<td>4.4.47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Driver mechanic</td>
<td>Lacerated left knee</td>
<td>29.4.47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Compound fracture of right second toe</td>
<td>2.5.47</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>16.19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Plateman</td>
<td>Lacerated wound to scalp and shock - electricity short circuit</td>
<td>7.5.47</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Cornea ulcer in right eye - flying scat</td>
<td>27.6.47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4.19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Compound fracture of index finger and wounded tendon - saw cut</td>
<td>1.7.47</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5.8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Fractured rib - fall of piece of iron</td>
<td>8.7.47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Septic finger - piercing wire</td>
<td>2.8.47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Nature of Accident</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Days Absent</td>
<td>Compensation (£.s.d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Loss of 2nd and 3rd phalanges of finger - jammed finger</td>
<td>4.9.47</td>
<td>Not Avail</td>
<td>11. 4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Fractured foot</td>
<td>8.9.47</td>
<td>33½</td>
<td>15. 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Fractured left arm (still incapacitated)</td>
<td>22.9.47</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7. 8.0(to 8.1.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Fractured finger</td>
<td>10.10.47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3. 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Lost tip of finger</td>
<td>26.11.47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Firewood cutter</td>
<td>Lacerated foot</td>
<td>22.10.47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3. 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotuman</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Lacerated leg (from stone fall)</td>
<td>29.11.47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Lacerated foot</td>
<td>10.12.47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Truck driver</td>
<td>Face wound (still incapacitated)</td>
<td>12.12.47</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4. 8.10 (to 9.1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Lacerated finger</td>
<td>5.11.47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner</td>
<td>Hand injury from trucking (still incapacitated)</td>
<td>28.11.47</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.15.0 (to 2.1.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>Lacerated hand (by fan)</td>
<td>20.2.46</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>21. 3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Fractured thumb</td>
<td>7.10.47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>5. 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-Caste</td>
<td>Roaster operator</td>
<td>Hand injury</td>
<td>11.11.47</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5. 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>Miner/trucker (ug)</td>
<td>&quot;Died from heart failure&quot; after being pinned to ground by capsized truck</td>
<td>24.11.47</td>
<td>Death</td>
<td>NIL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data taken from Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula Return of Accidents for 12 months ending 31.12.47, Vat/Govt Mines Dept, CSR Co, etc.
The review of workers compensation legislation in colonial territories by the Colonial Labour Advisory Committee in 1948 included the recommendations that the amount of compensation in cases of permanent total incapacity be raised to the equivalent of 48 months' wages and that lump sums be replaced by pensions. Both proposals were rejected in Fiji and it was agreed only to raise the minimum rate from £125 to £170. There was, as one official observed,

...nothing generous in the latter proposal; £170 spread over 3 years is slightly less than £1.2.0 per week and there are few workmen nowadays who get as little as this. In the vast majority of cases a totally incapacitated workman would draw more than the prescribed minimum and if he is to be treated more generously the obvious method is to raise the period of 36 months to 48 months.

It was, however, to take nearly another decade for Colonial Office guidelines to make any impression on local legislation. In the meantime, the basis of assessing compensation became increasingly out of step with soaring living costs and rising wages, as well as with the prevailing practice in other colonies. Awards, even the government admitted later, remained inordinately low.
Recreational Policy and Pursuits

The rapid growth of an industrial community of unprecedented proportions and racial diversity raised early apprehension within the colonial administration. The scramble for claims in the vicinity of Borthwick's discovery and the phase of frenetic activity which followed the introduction of capital and labour were attended by the emergence of sprawling settlements in advance of any planning. Bi-monthly inspections by an overworked district office (located in Tavua) could scarcely keep abreast of developments on the goldfields; and for officials who could be spared from the supervision of other district affairs, there were the varied and demanding tasks of monitoring the prospecting work on each claim, recording lease and licence transactions, as well as chasing tax evaders, regulating the movement of women into the area, and overseeing standards of housing and sanitation.

The dislocating effects of Fijian recruitment were felt in the donor villages and districts but they were also evident at the mines themselves. The unique character of a mining town - its isolation, concentration and sexual imbalance - and the removal of Fijians from the sanctions of traditional society raised the daunting spectre of social, and later, industrial unrest. So quickly and forcefully was the impact of this new industrial experience felt, that 'immorality', dancing and drinking were widespread within a few years. Parents, chiefs and native ministers, the Methodist Church lamented, seemed '...powerless to check this revolt against established custom.'
A report of a church commission in 1938 provided illuminating evidence of the church’s preoccupation with the spiritual and moral laxity of Fijians. It presented a telling backdrop to the state’s central role in establishing social control at the mines:

It is to be expected that with the impact of an evolved and aggressive civilization such as ours upon a more or less primitive social structure, there would be serious dislocation and necessary adjustments. The unexpected thing is the rapidity of the change; and herein is the real danger, for the strain upon the moral fabric is such that serious and perhaps irreparable rupture is taking place. The Government is perturbed and admits that it cannot keep pace with the movements; and our Mission, with its moral and spiritual interests, is keenly aware of the dangers that threaten. So rapid is the change that in even a space of three years one feels that a different Fijian has arisen. 2

Measures taken to control the movement of Fijian women outside their villages of origin sprang from initiatives of the colonial government and the Fijian chieftaincy. They were couched in a shared social code which prescribed for women a dependent and disciplined existence shaped by the demands of a patriarchal society. As early as 1887, an ordinance declared it an offence for any woman to absent herself from her home for one month without 'any just or reasonable cause' or 'the permission' of her local or district chief. An unmarried woman was forbidden to leave her village without the permission of her parents, guardian or mataqali. Penal sanctions took the form of labour services - activities such as weaving mats, making masi (beaten bark cloth), nets or pottery. 3

The Native Courts Code of 1927 made written permits obligatory and introduced controls on movement in certain 'prohibited areas' including the magisterial district of Suva and the municipality of Levuka. Women who remained in one of these areas without authorisation for more than one month became liable to arrest and repatriation. Second or subsequent offences brought the likelihood
of labour services similar to those prescribed above. The exemption of those women accompanied by 'husbands, fathers, or male persons under whose control they are according to native custom' or those in regular employment in such areas was probably a pragmatic response to the increasing demand for Fijian labour around the 1920's. It did not impair the structure of male dominance and control. 4

With the establishment of the goldfields, social control assumed a more specific focus. The disturbing incidence of venereal disease was attributed to female prostitution and triggered off a spate of measures aimed not just at removing 'infected women' from the mines but at fortifying the barriers to the influx of Fijian women generally. The Tavua gold fields were added to the list of 'prohibited' areas in 1935 and greater vigilance was exercised in order to enforce the 1927 code.

Evidence that certain chiefs were being seduced by the prospect of communal incomes into abetting rather than restraining the illicit traffic prompted the administration to require from 1935 that a woman's permit be authorised by higher ranking officials. Further, under amended legislation, women now became liable to prosecution after two days unauthorised presence at the mines or any other 'prohibited' zone. They were also subject to the stiffer penalties of a £1 fine or a one month prison sentence. Both of these were raised to £2 and two months respectively in 1937 and reinforced by the introduction of a £5 fine or three months imprisonment for second offenders. 5 Privately, Barton acknowledged the tougher penalties to be 'Draconian', but his reservations did not prevent 170 women from being prosecuted (sent home, fined or imprisoned) between 1936 and 1937 alone. 6
If moral opprobrium and punitive action were directed exclusively at the women who indulged in prostitution, the state's attempts to ferret out the offenders in order to lessen the associated health risks were hampered, at least initially, by the mining companies themselves. The latter's assurance that they would be equally attentive to removing 'these undesirables' from the field belied their ambivalence to the whole question of prostitution. The group was alert to the debilitating effect on health and the reduced work efficiency caused by venereal disease. It was also aware that the presence of 'girls' promoted absenteeism for they tended to 'keep the Fijian labourers awake till 2 or 3 in the morning'. There was, on the other hand, a strong case for permitting its European workers to exploit a cheap and accessible source of pleasure.

So obviously was female prostitution regarded as an esteemed service that the local superintendent of police suggested in 1936 that the group considered it

...was necessary to retain a certain number of Resident Prostitutes for the use of and abuse by the European Employees [although] Prostitutes were NOT necessary for the retention of Fijian Labour.

It was not the only expression of official cynicism about capital's commitment to enforcing the law. 'This is not the first time', the District Commissioner Colo North (Reay) noted in response, that

I have heard the suggestion that the presence of Fijian women on the mine field is regarded as an advantage, as an inducement to keep some of the European employees particularly the miners, and the District Commissioner tells me that he is convinced himself that this is the policy.

The continuing presence of women in contravention of the native regulations - particularly around pay day every four weeks - elicited a sober warning from the colonial secretariat that it
'[would] not countenance any form of prostitution by these women in the goldfields area'.

There is little on record to indicate whether the 'moral laxity' of the mining community extended to large scale prostitution during the early 1940's. A report from the District Commissioner Ba following the major strike of 1947, however, suggested that the practice was by no means suppressed. No direct charge was made, but beneath his euphemistic turn of phrase, the officer delivered an unambiguous message:

When I was at Vunidawa in 1941, busloads of Fijian women would leave for the Mines on payday and then later return to their villages. It is true that quite a number went to see husbands and relatives but the majority went for a good time. 12

By then, management itself regarded the 'vulagi' (or alien) peril as a 'menace', although a residual acceptance of the advantages of female patronage was still evident. 13 This was especially so in the aftermath of the war when Fijian labour still fell well below requirements: 'undesirable women', Ratu Sukuna commented, appeared to have 'a free run' at this time. 14 Alongside this, the efforts to control the influx of women to the mines were modified to meet the industry's need for a more stable and productive workforce. This dictated a policy geared more to selection than outright rejection: women who through wedlock would become the caretakers and the reproducers of labour.

Official regulation of social life was not confined to prostitution. Dancing was one of the more popular recreational activities open to Fijians at the mines but because of its alleged association with the rising tide of 'immorality', it too was subject to scrutiny and
control. Prohibition of 'native' dances (including the taralala) held without a permit, went back to the 19th century. An offence carried the penalty of a £5 fine or, in default, a (maximum) imprisonment term of one month with the possibility of hard labour. 15

During the early 1930's, the CSR was asked to assist in 'suppressing' the taralala amongst its Fijian employees. Management was willing to cooperate and accepted unreservedly the medical view which claimed '...a serious increase in venereal disease directly and indirectly due to lewd dancing'. 16 The mining companies similarly complied with official regulations. Well into the 1960's, their Fijian workers held dances or convened other social gatherings only with their consent. The occasions were usually policed.17

Gambling and 'sly-grog' dealing were two other vices condemned by contemporary standards of ruling class morality and thus forbidden under colonial law. For the mining companies, the consumption of large amounts of alcohol and night time gambling had a deleterious effect on the efficiency of Fijian labour. By March 1940, government inspections as well as their own surveillance had failed to suppress either activity and Theodore accordingly approached the central administration with a plan for a police force to be stationed at the mines. The proposal won support as did his suggestion that the cost be shared between them.18 Later in the year, the Governor confidently justified this measure to the Legislative Council:

During the course of the last few months it has become increasingly evident that it was impossible to control the mining towns at Vatukoula from Tavua Station, and that only by the establishment of an efficient police post in the mines could the control of the troublesome section of the mining population be effected. 19
Guided by colonial convention, in particular the practice of the CSR, Theodore's early decision was to create a mining township of distinct and virtually self-contained racial settlements. Investment in the social welfare of mineworkers conformed with the discriminatory basis of their earnings. And a segregated pattern of recreation helped to regulate community life and to inhibit social intercourse between the resident ethnic groups. Although 'in a system of otherwise naked exploitation', as one historian has put it, 'social life could be used as the loin cloth of respectability', the paucity of recreational opportunities open to Fijians was conspicuous beside the opulence of sporting clubs, holiday cottages and other facilities provided for Europeans.

As early as 1937, the group built a social hall for European workers and their families. This comprised a dance hall, library, billiard room, barber's shop, and a 'talkie theatre'. It constructed a floodlit tennis court and a 9-hole golf course and club house which accommodated a bar, changing facilities and a room for dances and social functions. A bowling green with eight floodlit rinks, described as 'the mecca of many of the European employees' was also serviced by a club house and bar amongst other facilities.

Requests from the half-caste community for a social hall in 1939 met with the initial response that members could build their own facility outside working hours. But they eventually won their battle mainly because management accepted that the demands of overtime and late work made it impossible for them to do this. Later extensions to the hall provided a library, billiard table and
refreshment room; and a tennis court was built nearby. The European privilege of deep sea fishing by company launch was also extended to half-castes.

Separate halls for the Fijian and Rotuman communities followed but they were furnished on a much more modest scale. A radio alone was provided in each of the three Fijian halls and there were 'separate building(s)' for their dances or other social functions. While European, Rotuman, half-caste and Fijian children celebrated Christmas around separate Christmas trees, the publicity given to film shows also left no doubt that race was the guiding principle of organised recreation:

THERE WILL BE A SCREENING OF DOCUMENTARY SOUND FILMS IN THE SOCIAL HALL ON SUNDAY EVENING, 3RD APRIL, 1949 COMMENCING AT 7.30 pm.

THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME WILL BE SHOWN:-

ALL THE KINGS MEN
THE BLUE RIBBON
RAILWAYMEN
SWEDES IN AMERICA

THE SCREENING WILL LAST APPROXIMATELY TWO HOURS. ALL EUROPEANS AND EURONESIANS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

A SIMILAR PROGRAMME WILL BE SCREENED FOR THE FIJIAN COMMUNITY ON SATURDAY EVENING, 2ND APRIL, 1949, COMMENCING AT 7.30 p.m. IN THE FIJIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOL.

T.A. Rodgers
Mine Superintendent

VATUKOULA
30th MARCH, 1949

Organised sporting activities - rugby, soccer, cricket, and later hockey and boxing - were a main source of recreation for Fijians and other non-Europeans, and they were encouraged by the group. The
construction of a playing ground followed a request from Fijian workers, and in 1939 a sports council was established to ensure the 'proper conduct and control' of activities. Sport was one area where management was, moreover, willing to tolerate a certain amount of racial mixing; and it was within the council's mandate to be responsible for those activities where

it is desired the Europeans, Euronesians and Natives may combine. This combination of races will be allowed, especially in the conduct of the Cricket section, as this Sport throughout Fiji is played by mixed teams. 26

The policy was not in fact as permissive as it appeared for the desegregation of sporting activities - where allowed - meant only that different races were permitted to compete against each other. It did not entail the mixed composition of the teams. By promoting racial competition, this formula was more conducive to entrenching rather than dissipating communalist loyalties.

The discriminatory basis of investment in recreation was not confined to the provision or construction of facilities but continued in order to cover maintenance costs. For the financial year 1941, the Theodore group contributed nearly £10,000 to the various sports clubs and associations patronised by mineworkers and staff. Of this amount, barely 15% was allocated to those facilities open to Fijians. The mines' golf, tennis, and bowling clubs, swimming pool, launch, Trout Acclimatisation Society, and European social hall— all except the launch admitting only Europeans— claimed by far the largest proportion of company grants. Half-castes won some financial support for their social hall; while funds (totalling £300) allocated to the improvement of Fijian sports facilities that year were drawn from what the group entitled its 'Unpaid Wages Account'. 27
Education Policy

The provision of school facilities for the children of mineworkers was necessary if labour was to be attracted to the idea of permanent settlement at the mines. It was also integral to capital's desire to reproduce new generations of mine labour, for the acquisition of basic literacy and (English) language skills was useful, if not crucial, to occupational efficiency. The segregationist principles of the industry could, moreover, be applied to great effect in the field of education. By socialising children into the ruling ideology of racial distinction and hierarchy, and specifically inculcating in Fijian children a code of subservience applicable even to their (European) peers, the industry's formula of social control became at once more pervasive and more powerful.28

Yet, reluctant to accept the financial and other responsibilities relating to the management of Fijian education, the group's energy was directed towards persuading the state to accept full responsibility for this component of the industry's infrastructure. It steadily withdrew from involvement in Fijian education although the debate over this proved a protracted one—only finally resolved in 1948 when the state assumed complete control of the Fijian school and company subsidies towards its capital and operating costs were withdrawn.29

One immediate consequence of the tussles over costs and control was that Fijian children were without a proper school building until 1941. By this time, the numbers of school age children awaiting admission had climbed to more than 200.30 Thereafter, admissions consistently outstripped available accommodation and, in spite of
extensions in the mid-1940's, the school had some 100 children more than capacity. Congestion was to some extent alleviated from 1947 as boys left to join the workforce but understaffing remained a problem serious enough during the early 1950's to leave some classes without teachers.31

A significant proportion of the capital and recurrent costs of Fijian education was transferred to the mineworkers themselves. Until January 1942, all Fijians irrespective of whether or not they had children of school age at Vatukoula, had 6d deducted from their monthly wages. From the beginning of 1941, one-third of the cost of constructing the school buildings was raised by way of an additional levy of 1/-$. This payment continued as a contribution to school fees after the buildings were completed, and was raised to 2/- in 1944 to enable the group to recover one-third of the cost of extensions.32

Wage deductions were iniquitous not only because they applied to all workers but also because Fijians already paid an education tax to their home provinces. And although the original contribution to building construction was approved by the company-appointed Fijian Committee, deductions on the whole provoked widespread resentment within the community. This intensified as overcrowding and inadequate staffing left many children without any education at all.33

The group attended to European education with a greater sensitivity to school accommodation and teaching standards. As early as 1937, when numbers totalled only 40, it financed the cost of a school for European and half-caste children.34 Running expenses were met out
of an annual government grant and school fees, but it covered the cost of extensions (in 1946) and any deficits. More important, however, was the heavy cost of segregating European and half-caste education, the integration of which had probably only been permitted in earlier years because of the small numbers of both communities. As the half-caste workforce had expanded, the school's racial balance had shifted noticeably towards a sizeable half-caste majority. It was viewed with some disapproval that some of the children 'listed' as half-caste were 'possibly over the borderline'.

Solicitous of the mounting discontent amongst its European recruits, most of whom were opting for correspondence courses or boarding establishments in Suva, New Zealand or Australia for their children in preference to the 'mixed' environment of the mines' European school, the companies concluded that the enlargement of existing facilities was not enough; it did not take account of the dislike of parents of European children to a mixed school of European, Euronesian and other races, as there could be no possible way of keeping children apart under present conditions.

The establishment of a separate European school consolidated the privileges of a small expatriate élite. The school accommodated less than 20 children at a time when its Fijian counterpart had nearly 500 pupils and was plagued with overcrowding, understaffing and waiting lists. It incurred the combined costs of construction, an annual subsidy and a 25% contribution to teachers' salaries. As well as this, the reorganisation helped to increase the social distance between half-castes and Europeans – a few select half-caste children only being permitted to attend the school – and
thereby to cement the pattern of segregation and discrimination in the mining town.

When the state took control of the European school in 1948, there was one penalty: a more liberal policy on the question of mixed education was—at least in theory—espoused, since children of 'mixed parentage' were eligible for entry providing they had a high standard of English and could afford school fees of 14/- a term. Thereafter, the group did not withdraw entirely. It fought to ensure that the school was staffed by expatriate European teachers; and it also remained in a strong position to dictate a conservative policy to the Roman Catholic school, now its total responsibility.
CHAPTER FIVE - REFERENCES

Section I

1. See C.A.

2. See in particular Colonial Office circulars to colonies in 1935 and 1937, Malcolm MacDonald to Officer Administering Government of Fiji, 2.2.35, CSO F36/29; ibid W. Ormsby Gore to Officer Administering Government of Fiji, 24.8.37; International Labour Conference Report V 27th Session 1945 'Minimum Standards of Social Policy in Dependent Territories (Supplementary Provisions)', CSO F36/126 Pt2; Leg Co Debates, Attorney General 18.12.41; see C.A.

3. See C.A.

4. See correspondence between Director of Medical Services, Commissioner of Labour, Governor & Colonial Secretariat 1938-1954 in CSO F36/30 Pts 1&2.

5. C/L (Reay) to CS minute, 7.12.44, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.

6. ibid Director of Medical Services to CS, 26.8.38; ibid Medical Officer in Charge CWM to Director of Medical Services, 17.2.39; Director of Medical Services to CS, 20.2.39.

7. Leg Co Debates T.W.A. Barker (Junior Member for Southern Division), 14.11.35; C/L to CS, 16.8.44, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.

8. Acting Chief Sanitary Inspector to Director of Medical Services, 2.3.39, CSO F36/30 Pt 1; ibid C/L (Reay) to CS minute, 7.12.44.


10. Acting Director of Medical Services to CS, 6.11.40, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.

11. ibid Governor (Sir Alexander Grantham) to Acting CS, 10.3.45.

12. ibid V.W.T. McGusty to Dr Lindsay Verrier, Medical Officer Taveuni, 4.11.44.

13. Medical Officer of Health Northern (James Taylor) to Director of Medical Services, Report for May 1939, 10.6.39, CSO F48/137; ibid IOM & ME (Frank White) to Chairman Mining Board, 24.7.39.


15. M. Fletcher, 20.3.36, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.
16. ibid Governor (Richards) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 
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17. Theodore to Barton, 22.6.40, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence 
   Dec 1939-June 1940; ibid Juxon Barton to Theodore, 20.6.40.

18. Director of Medical Services (Pearce) to Acting CS, 7.12.35, 
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   F36/30 Pt 1.

20. ibid A.L. Armstrong Personal Assistant to CS to Governor 
   minute, 11.3.36.

21. Governor (Richards) to Secretary of State for Colonies, Extract 
   of Confidential Despatch, 24.3.38, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.

22. ibid Extract from Trinidad & Tobago Disturbances, 1937.

23. Medical Officer of Health Central & West to CS memo, 16.6.42, 
   CSO F48/137; Leg Co Debates, 1.12.38; Governor to Acting CS, 
   10.3.45, CSO F36/30 Pt 1.

24. Excerpt from Minutes of Nutrition Committee, Medical Department 
   2nd meeting, CSO F48/222. The Nutrition Committee comprised 
   various government medical & administrative officials with the 
   Director of Medical Services as Chairman.

25. Managing Director EGM & Loloma E.G. Theodore to CS, 21.9.38, 
   CSO F48/222.

26. See Chief Aerodromes Engineer to C/L memo, 29.9.42, CSO 
   F48/222; ibid P.M. Johnston, General Manager Mt Kasi Mines Ltd 
   to C/L, 24.10.42; ibid R. Little Kanacea Estate to C/L, 
   19.11.42; ibid Arthur Robinson Vunilagi Estate to C/L, 
   14.10.42; ibid R.S. Lyons, Devo Buca Bay to C/L, 12.10.42.

27. Colonial Office to Governor, Dr B.S. Platt (Medical Research 
   Council) Notes, 28.7.43, CSO F48/222.

28. Reay to CS, Diets, 2.3.48, CSO F48/222.

29. Vatukoula Fijian Committee Meeting minutes, 18.12.47, Vat/.

30. J.L.V. Sukuna to CS, 16.5.44, CSO F28/126 Pt 1.
Section II

1. EGM Co Ltd Rates of Pay Allowances & Conditions European Employees - Wages Staff only, Half-caste and Fijian Employees, CSO F36/39; Chief Medical Officer to Acting CS, 17.4.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

2. Chief Medical Officer to Acting CS memo, 17.4.35, CSO F48/137. 'Drastic' improvements were also considered necessary for half-caste accommodation and a reduction in the numbers in both half-caste and 'native' quarters 'by at least one half'. DC Ba monthly diary for April 1935, CSO F10/6 Pt 5.

3. Community Officer Report for period ending 6.5.36, 7.5.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; Minutes of Meeting of Directors EGM, 21.2.36, Vat/Emperor Mines Aug 1935-Dec 1939; Chairman & Secretary Fijian Labour Committee to Acting General Manager, 30.10.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; Fijian Committee Meeting minutes 18.12.47, Vat/.

4. ibid Acting Deputy Commissioner Police Report on 1938 Tavua strike, 16.11.38, CSO F36/39/1. The District Medical Officer confirmed that the vermin question at the mines was 'long standing'. ibid District Medical Officer Ba to Director of Medical Services, 5.12.38.

5. Nilsen to Theodore, 16.12.38, Vat/Confidential to 1940; District Medical Officer Ba to Director of Medical Services, 5.12.38, CSO F36/39/1.

6. See C.A.


8. This still only gave about 2 feet between bunks. Medical Officer of Health (Northern) to Acting Director Medical Services memo, 16.12.40, CSO F48/137; General Manager Loloma to Managing Director Loloma, 3.7.40, Vat/Loloma.

9. Safety Officer to General Manager, 27.9.51, Vat/Emperor Period Reports July 1951 - July 1953; Secretary FMWU Basilio Mata to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 22.8.51, Vat/.

10. General Manager to Community Officer memo, 8.3.44, Vat/Dept Memos 1941 - May 44.

11. Managing Director, circa Aug 1935, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-. The 1935 Native Health (Amendment) Regulations (No 6, 1935) stipulated that the minimum dimensions of a married house be 24' x 12' and a further amended regulation in 1939 (CP No 19, 1939) required houses outside a village to be provided with a suitable latrine. It was not however until after the war that houses with two rooms of slightly larger dimensions (20' x 14') were built - the second room providing an indoor kitchen. Some existing houses had an additional room
added. In 1948, the companies were instructed to pull down all small outside houses (kitchens) following government health inspections.

12. In 1944 Ratu Sukuna charged that 'In the daytime these houses are unlivable and towards morning they drip with moisture'. J.L.V. Sukuna to CS, 16.5.44, CSO F28/126 Pt 1: Community Officer to General Manager re. Meeting of Emperor Fijian Committee on 24.6.42, 25.6.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941 – May 1944; ibid Community Officer (Garnett) to General Manager re. Meeting of Fijian Committee on 23.9.42, 24.9.42; Meetings of Fijian Committee minutes 23.3.49 and 18.12.47, Vat/.

13. Community Officer to General Manager Memorandum of Meeting on 3.12.42, 4.12.42 Vat/Dept Memos 1941 – May 1944; ibid General Manager to Community Officer memo 12.12.42. Electricity was installed in the CSR (Fijian and Indian) labour lines in 1939. See Attorney in Fiji CSR to CS, 17.7.39, CSR 142/2561.


15. DC Ba monthly diary for April 1935, CSO F10/6 Pt 5. For early description of European dining facilities see Chief Medical Officer to Acting CS, 17.4.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

16. Cayzer to Secretary Central Board of Health, Medical Dept, 7.11.62 Vat/Depts of Education, Medical Forestry, Immigration & Labour 1961-63; Report Welfare Officer to General Manager for four weeks ending 12.5.65, 7.6.65, Vat/Emperor Mines Period Reports 8.7.64-June 1965; Joint Consultative Council Meeting minutes, 16.9.68, Vat/E.B. Turner JCC Notes.

17. Indian Medical Practitioner memo, 10.8.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; Chief Medical Officer to Acting CS, 17.4.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.

18. Attorney in Fiji CSR to Chairman Mining Board, 25.5.35, MR/Bunch 2, MB 7/136 Pt 1; ibid Acting Chairman Mining Board to Attorney in Fiji CSR, 18.6.35; ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board, 22.5.36. The instructions evidently had little effect, for a deputation of Indians and Fijians complained to the local District Commissioner in 1938 that a new slime dam was polluting the river. DC Ba & Tavua monthly diary for Feb 1938, CSO F10/6 Pt 8.

19. See DC Ba monthly diaries for Feb & Oct 1939, CSO F10/6. Director of Public Works to CS, 10.12.35, CSO F63/58 Pt 1; ibid Director of Public Works to Crown Agents, 14.9.36; ibid Medical Officer of Health (Northern) to Director of Medical Services memo, 16.12.40, CSO F48/137; ibid Medical Officer of Health Central & West to CS memo, 16.6.42.
20. Mining Regulations 1934, No 31. For example of early Indian representations, see Chattur Singh to CS, 4.12.37, CSO F63/58 Pt 1 and for later protests see chapter seven.

21. By June 1937, 1014 inoculations against typhoid had been given at the mines. Indian Medical Practitioner to General Manager memo, 14.6.37, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

22. ibid Notice, Nilsen General Manager, 12.6.37.

23. Nilsen to Theodore, 24.10.38, Vat/Confidential to 1940.

24. Dr A.J. Borg to Manager Emperor Mines memo, 28.4.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; Medical Officer of Health (Central & West) to CS, 16.6.42, CSO F48/137; ibid IOM & ME to Director of Mines memo, 24.4.40.

25. It was not until 1940 that - under the direction of the IOM - the companies considered installing some form of underground latrine system. Before then, men returned to the surface. IOM & ME to Director of Mines memo, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137; ibid IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 27.6.40.

26. IOM & ME to Director Mines memo, 24.4.40, CSO F 48/137; Safety Officer to General Manager, 10.4.52, Vat/Data From and To Other Mines.

27. General Manager Loloma to Managing Director Loloma, 3.7.40, Vat/Loloma; Medical Officer of Health (Northern) to Director Medical Services, 11.5.40, CSO F48/137; ibid Medical Officer of Health (Northern) to Acting Director Medical Services, 16.12.40; ibid Medical Officer of Health (Central & West) to CS memo, 16.6.42.

28. IOM & ME to Director of Mines memo, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.

29. Safety Officer to General Manager, 10.4.52, Vat/Data From & To Other Mines; Abel Smith to Theodore memo, 22.5.47, Vat/Insurance Workers Compensation Current File; Meeting Fijian Committee minutes, 9.8.48, Vat/.

30. Lord to General Manager Sydney Private, 20.6.39, CSR 142/2904.

31. Chairman & Secretary Fijian Labour Committee to Acting General Manager, 31.10.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; ibid Assistant General Manager to Chairman Fijian Labour Committee, 11.12. 36.

32. Community Officer (Garnett) to Lord memo, 30.4.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944 Community Officer.

33. For examples of this policy (ringworm cases) see General Manager to Community Officer, 28.4.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; (trachoma cases) see Community Officer to General Manager Report 3.9.41, Vat/Emperor Period Reports to Melbourne Office; (venereal disease cases) see Vat/Emperor Period Reports to Melbourne Office Community Officer Reports 1944; (tuberculosis cases) see Community Officer (H.W. Garnett) to General Manager Report, 1.11.39, Vat/lgv/11 Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939-40; and Vat/Insurance Workers
Compensation Current File. The service record cards of Fijian employees also reveal the extent of this practice. It has not been possible in this thesis to look in detail at the impact of migrant labour on rural health. There are however several references in official correspondence to outbreaks of dysentery and VD in village communities following the return of mine labour. See for example SNA N43/32; Macuata Provincial Council Report 1937; Colo East Provincial Council Report 1936.

34. Medical Officer Ba to General Medical Practitioner Vatukoula, 18.8.41, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944; ibid Community Officer (Garrett) to General Manager memo, 2.9.41; Community Officer to General Manager Report 3.1.41, Vat/Emperor Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1941. An examination in 1951 of selected Loloma and Dolphin workers revealed that 21.7% were suffering from trachoma or related eye infections such as corneal opacities and conjunctivitis. See Safety Officer to General Manager Report 17.10.51, Vat/Emperor Period Reports July 1952-July 1953.

35. Extract from a letter from Director of Medical Services & Secretary for Indian Affairs, 10.2.41, CSO F48/280; Nilsen General Manager to E.G. Theodore, 30.12.38, Vat/General Correspondence May 1938-Sept 1939; ibid Managing Director to Secretary EGM Co Melbourne, 30.6.39.

36. For the first few years of mining, a European government medical officer (District Medical Officer Ba) visited the mines once a week (paid £500 p.a. by the companies); but from the end of 1939, the administration prohibited all its practitioners from engaging in private work and the group accordingly recruited the part-time services of a CSR doctor based in Ba. He visited the mines three times a week. This arrangement was still in operation in 1947, by which time a community of about 3,500 was served in addition by only one resident Native Medical Practitioner and two Native Welfare Nurses whose work was mainly pre-natal care. A maternity annexe was opened in 1941. See Managing Director to Secretary EGM Co Melbourne, 30.6.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar 1938-Sept 1939; ibid General Manager to Theodore, 17.11.39, CSR 142/1104; and Nilsen to Director of Medical Services, 17.7.47, Vat/Insurance Workers Compensation Current File.

37. Managing Director EGM (Theodore) to V.W.T. McGusty Director of Medical Services, 20.2.41, CSO F48/280. Theodore proposed that a hospital at Tavua be built and made a tentative offer of £8,000 towards the cost of construction in addition to an annual contribution by the companies and workers towards running and maintenance costs.

38. Director of Medical Services to General Manager, 31.7.47, Vat/Insurance Workers Compensation Current File. The colony's hospital ward for tuberculosis victims in Suva suffered from overcrowding in the post-war period. This meant that patients had to remain at the mines until there were beds available, thus increasing the risk of infecting others. In 1947, two mineworkers died while awaiting admission to the hospital. Abel Smith to Theodore, memo, 22.5.47, Vat/Insurance Workers
Compensation Current File; DC Central Extract of diary for Nov 1940, CSO F48/280; Mine Superintendent (Mitchell) to General Manager, 25.11.43, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944.

39. ibid Acting CS (Johnson) to Governor, 8.8.41; see also ibid S. Reay to CS, 24.2.41.

40. Ordinance No 5, 1891.

41. S. Reay to CS, 24.2.41, CSO F48/280.

42. ibid Governor to CS, 19.8.41.

43. Mining (Amendment) (No 2) Regulation 1935.

44. Fiji Times and Herald 27.2.51 and C.W. Cayzer to Editor 6.3.51. Na Lokobono has no clear meaning although bono literally means to block up or dam. The expression (used here as a pen name) is possibly in dialect, but it was suggested by a number of Fijian (Bauan) speakers that it was a (deliberate?) misprint for Na yaloka bona meaning stinking egg.

45. Unpublished letter by Na Lokobono to Editor Fiji Times and Herald 12.3.51, Vat/Miscellaneous Correspondence - Secretary.

46. Alport Barker to Kayzer [sic], 20.3.51, Vat/ Miscellaneous Correspondence - Secretary.
Section III

1. See C.A.

2. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.

3. Dr Austin Edwards 'Petrological Report on Rock Specimens from some Fiji Gold Mines, with special reference to the presence in them of minerals likely to give rise to injurious dusts', 17.3.36, Enclosure No. 2, CO 83/215.

4. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137. See IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 14.2.36, Enclosure No. 1, and Enclosures No. 2 & 3 in CO 83/215 for detailed discussion of silicosis, its incidence, analysis and preventive measures.

5. Dr Austin Edwards 'Petrological Report on Rock Specimens...' CO 83/215. According to the associated companies, Emperor ore contained approx 50% silica mainly in the form of silicates and the Loloma ore 60% as quartz and silicates. See 5th Empire Mining & Metallurgy Congress Ventilation & Hygiene Section Questionnaire Emperor & Loloma Mines Answers Mar 1952, Vat/Data From and To Other Mines.

6. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 21.4.36, Enclosure No. 3, CO 83/215. The Mining Regulations required a 'current of not less than one hundred cubic feet of fresh air per minute for each man, boy or horse employed in the underground workings of the mine'. See Mining Regulations 1934, Part VII Regulation 111 (1) (i).

7. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 14.2.36, Enclosure No. 1, CO 83/215; IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 23.9.37, MR/207/.../307/ML 1/3 to 5-1; IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.

8. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board 21.4.36, Enclosure No. 3, CO 83/215.

9. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137; IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 14.2.36, Enclosure No. 1, CO 83/215.

10. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137. In an addit on No. 1 level of Emperor mine for example, the relative humidity, calculated by an average of dry and wet bulb recordings, was as much as 91% in 1937. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 23.9.37, MR/207/.../302/ML 1/3 to 5-1.

11. Enclosures No. 1 & 3..., CO 83/215. White, Grieve's successor as Inspector of Mines, did not consider it necessary to measure the velocity of air by an anemometer, arguing that flame deflection, the prevailing practice of testing whether air flows were adequate, was satisfactory. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 23.9.37, MR/207/.../302/ML 1/3 to 5-1.

12. Enclosure No 3..., CO 83/215.
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13. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137; Vat/Data From & To Other Mines.

14. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 23.9.37, MR/207/.../302/ML 1/3 to 5-1. For mineworkers at the face, blowers were often up to 500 ft away. Interview with Rotuman mineworker, Vatukoula, July 1982.

15. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.

16. ibid


18. 5th Empire Mining & Metallurgy Congress Ventilation & Hygiene Section Questionnaire Emperor & Loloma Mines Answers Mar 1952, Vat/Data From & To Other Mines.


20. Interviews with mineworkers Vatukoula, July 1982 and Suva, October 1983. In 1935, a request for compensation in the form of 'wet pay' was put to Theodore but rejected. DC Ba monthly diary for Nov 1935, CSO FlO/6 Pt 5.

21. Interview with mineworker Suva, August 1982. The 1934 Mining Regulations, No III (xxxvii) required '...sufficient accommodation...above ground near the principal entrance of the mine...for enabling the persons employed in the mine conveniently to dry and change their clothes...' but the first change house was not built until 1941 and workers at the Dolphin Mine were without this facility until 1948. Emperor Annual Report 1941; Vat/Dolphin Mines Ltd Oct 1947-May 1951.


23. Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar 1938-Sept 1939; Mine Superintendent to General Manager Dolphin Mines Ltd, Reports for periods ending 10.3.48, 5.5.48 and 22.9.48, Vat/Dolphin Mines Ltd Oct 1947-May 1951; Nilsen to Theodore (Sydney), 8.3.48, CORR EGT/NEN.


25. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 21.4.36, Enclosure No. 3, CO 83/215.

26. DC Ba & Tavua monthly diary for Sept 1938, CSO FlO/6 Pt 8.

27. Interviews with mineworkers Suva, Aug 1982; Vatukoula, Jan 1981. One Fijian mill worker of 10 years insisted that medical treatment was constantly sought by roaster workers and that it was necessary to go out for fresh air every few hours. Another claimed that there was 'a lot of sickness' amongst families living in the Loloma community. On fieldwork in 1982, my own observations confirmed these charges. The engulfment of the mining settlement in the low lying gaseous cloud, particularly in the early morning and at dusk, was a daily occurrence. A
tour of the mill left me gasping and there was a twice daily ritual of closing all windows at least for a few hours to fend off repeated bouts of asthma.

28. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.

29. Cayzer to Secretary FMWU, 22.10.54, Vat/.


31. 5th Empire Mining & Metallurgy Congress..., Vat/Data From & To Other Mines.

32. Enclosure No 1..., CO 83/215.

33. Memorandum on the Prevention of Silicosis Among Miners in Fiji, 11.5.36, Enclosure No. 4, CO 83/215.

34. Despatch illegible signature, Oct 1937, CO 83/218 (85192/37).

35. IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137.

36. Total workforce of the associated mines was approximately 1,500.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workers Examined</th>
<th>Surface</th>
<th>Underground</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons of Mixed Descent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Fijians</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Races</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40, CSO F48/137; ibid Director of Medical Services to CS, 14.10.38.

37. ibid IOM & ME to Director of Mines, 24.4.40.

38. ibid

39. ibid

40. ibid Director of Mines (Charlton) to CS, 26.4.40, CSO F48/137. The Hemsley report recommended a full examination of mineworkers every two years and Reay urged in Sept 1940 that 'systematic action' be taken by the Medical Dept to follow this up. ibid Stuart Reay IRO, to Section D minute, 22.9.40.

41. The Colonial Office also noted the need for special training of medical officers to enable them to detect silicosis. See Despatch illegible signature Oct 1937, CO 83/218 (85192/37).

42. It was particularly significant that chronic bronchitis could be caused by inhaling dust and gas irritants and that its symptoms were shortness of breath, constant coughing and expectorating.
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43. IOM to Chairman of Mining Board, 14.2.36, Enclosure No. 1, CO 83/215. In fatal cases, the duration of the disease varied between four and five years where conditions were 'bad' and 20 years where they were 'better'; '...more generally after 12 or 14 years the inroads of the disease unfit him for service as a miner and death supervenes within the next 2 or 3 years'. ibid

44. The service record cards of Fijian mineworkers show frequent entries of 'discharged own accord' or 'leave required' owing to ill health as well as 'discharged (involuntary) through illness/medically unfit'.

45. Safety Officer R.H. Yarrow, 'A Brief History of Organised Safety Work on the Vatukoula Goldfield together with an indication of the costs involved and the benefits gained', 19.11.53 Vat/. Assistant Medical Practitioner Vatukoula Aseri Manulevu to Director of Medical Services, 27.2.52, Vat/ Information supplied to Chief General Manager 1964-1965.

46. Assistant Medical Officer C&W to Director of Medical Services, 31.10.40, CSO F48/137.


48. Cayzer General Manager to Chairman of Mining Board, 25.9.53, CSO F48/137.

49. Safety Officer to General Manager, 10.4.52, Vat/Data From & To Other Mines; Mining Dept Bosses Meeting, 15.7.47, Vat/Emperor Mine Bosses Meetings Accident Reports.

50. The 1935 Public Health Ordinance listed silicosis as an infectious not as an occupational disease and therefore the question of compensation did not arise. (Ordinance No 29, 1935).

51. Memorandum, Workers Compensation Model Ordinance (East & West Africa), 1762/4/35 [No 2], CSO F36/3 Pt 2. The adoption of the legislation was also discouraged because of the iniquitous awards which might arise from diagnosis by inexperienced medical officers. P. Cunliffe Lister to Officer Administering the Government of Fiji, 13.5.32, CSO F36/3 Pt 1.

52. Leg Co Debate on Workers Compensation Bill, 23.5.40.

53. Workers Compensation (Amendment) Ordinance No 16, 1946.

54. Secretary of State for Colonies to Officer Administering the Government of Fiji Circular Despatch 12325/50, 19.9.50, CSO F36/177.

55. ibid Acting Director of Medical Services to CS, 7.4.52.

56. ibid C/L (Reay) to CS minute, 28.2.52; ibid Section A (KRB) to Assistant CS minute, 24.4.52.
57. Dermatitis, miner's nystagmus, subcutaneous cellulitis of the hand, knee and elbow were listed in the 3rd schedule. In the existing local legislation, ankylostomiosis, dysentery, influenza, pneumonia, trachoma, typhoid and tuberculosis were included but not as occupational conditions.

58. Acting Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies savingram No 210, 30.4.52, CSO F36/177.

59. C/L (Reay) to CS minute, 28.2.52, CSO F36/177; Leg Co Debate on Factories Bill, 1.5.57.
Section IV


2. IOM (Frank White) to Chairman Mining Board, 9.11.38, CSO F36/39/1; IOM & ME to Chairman Mining Board, 30.8.39, CSO F111/54; ibid Frank White (IOM & ME) for Director of Lands, 6.12.44.

3. Frequency Rate = No of lost time accidents per 1,000 man shifts.
    Severity Rate = No of shifts lost per 1,000 man shifts.

   Between 1946 and 1947 the FR and SR were 1.42 and 9.59 respectively. Being the first year of organised safety work, these figures would undoubtedly have been higher in earlier years. 'A Brief History' 19.11.53, Vat/. For discussion of the prevalence of hand, foot and eye accidents see Associated Mining Companies - Vatukoula Return of Accidents for 12 months ending 31.12.47, Vat/Mines Dept, CSR Co etc; Vat/Insurance Workers Compensation Current File; Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-; IOM to Chairman Mining Board, 1.10.38, CSO F36/39/1; Report by IOM, 24.11.38, SNA N44/12/22; ibid General Manager Loloma (Fiji) GMNL to DC Ba, 16.11.37.

4. Barring down consisted of the construction of timber supports. In the absence of good supervision, it might also be commenced prematurely, that is, when the area was not safe to enter. See IOM & ME to Chairman Mining Board Mining Accident Reports, Appendix A, 30.8.39, CSO F111/54; and for later discussion Vat/Emperor Mine Period Reports 10.7.63-June 1964.


6. Chairman of Mining Board (Holmes) to CS, 19.12.34, CSO F11/7.

7. See DC Ba & Tavua monthly diaries for Jan, Feb, April, July and Oct 1937, CSO F10/6 Pt 7. The mining regulations of 1934 required that all serious accident enquiries be conducted by the District Commissioner assisted by two experienced miners selected by him. (Part VII Reg 107). The question of supervision of mining conditions by administrative officers who did 'not normally have the special technical qualifications...', was one raised by the Colonial Office in 1935. See Malcolm MacDonald to Officer Administering Government of Fiji, 9.11.35, CSO F36/29.

8. DC Ba & Tavua monthly diary for July 1937, CSO F10/6 Pt 7; see also diaries for Jan & Feb 1937.

9. See C.A.; and Frank White (IOM & ME) for Director of Lands, 6.12.44, CSO F111/54.
10. See C.A.

11. Leg Co Report of Economic Review Committee Debate, H.M. Scott (European Member for Northwest Division), 4.5.53; ibid Director of Lands, Mines & Surveys, 18.11.53.

12. An enquiry into a fatality in 1938 concluded that death was accidental and exonerated the company although the worker was inexperienced and clearly inadequately supervised. Frank T.M. White, Brief Report Upon Fatality at EGM Co Ltd 1.11.38, CSO F36/39/1. See for other examples IOM & ME to CS, Director of Lands, Mines and Surveys, 7.3.45, CSO F111/54; ibid IOM & ME to Chairman Mining Board, 30.8.39; see C.A.

13. IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.12.35, MR/Bunch 2, MB 7/136 Pt 1; Report by IOM, 24.11.38, SNA N44/12/22; ibid GM Loloma (Fiji) GMNL to DC Ba, 16.11.37.

14. 'A Brief History', 19.11.53, Vat/.

15. IOM & ME to Chairman Mining Board, 30.8.39, CSO F111/54.


17. 'A Brief History', 19.11.53, Vat/.


19. ibid Mining Dept Bosses Meetings 12.8.47 & 23.2.48.

20. ibid Mining Dept Bosses Meetings 28.2.49 and 19.6.50; Safety Officer to General Manager Report - 14.11.51, 23.11.51, Vat/Emperor Period Reports July 1952-July 1953; ibid Safety Officer to General Manager Report - 27.5.53, 18.6.53.


22. ibid Mining Dept Bosses Meetings 8.11.48 and 28.2.49.

23. ibid Mining Dept Bosses Meeting No 38, 23.2.48.

24. ibid Mining Dept Bosses Meetings 28.2.49 and 19.6.50.


28. Nilsen General Manager to Chairman of Directors EGM, 10.7.44, Vat/Emperor Budget Estimates Finance etc Current File. In the Engineering Dept, instruction was also recommended in order to 'rehabilitate' returned soldiers. See Minutes of Dept Managers
Meeting held 1.6.44, Vat/Meetings of Executive - Current File; Nilsen General Manager EGM, Loloma, Dolphin to CS, 21.6.49, CSO F36/160; ibid Reay C/L to CS memo, 9.4.51, re. the government's early abortive attempt to interest employers in a uniform system of apprenticeship.

29. Director of Education to Nilsen, 5.11.47, Vat/Education. The companies did in fact volunteer to contribute a sum of £100 p.a. towards the cost of tools, equipment, etc. and this was accepted. ibid Nilsen General Manager to Director of Education (H. Hayden), 22.11.47; ibid Director of Education (Hayden) to Nilsen, 26.11.47.

30. ibid Director of Education to Nilsen, 5.11.47. In 1948, the number (of all races) receiving instruction totalled only 76. Director of Education to CS, 14.7.49, CSO F36/174.

31. Mining Dept Bosses Meeting No 38, 23.2.48, Vat/Emperor Mines Bosses Meetings Accident Reports Current File.

32. For details see Circular Secretary of State to Officer Administering Government of Fiji, 17.9.30, CSO F36/3 Pt 1; and Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention No 17, 1925.

33. See Lester Colonial Office to Governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher, 30.6.32, CSO F36/3 Pt 1; and Extract Governor's Despatch No 250, 25.7.32, CSO F36/3 Pt 1.

34. Addendum by the Unofficial Members (Hedstrom and Scott) to 'The Report of a Committee of the Executive Council...To report upon the application to the colony of two conventions concerning sickness insurance for workers', 18.3.32, CSO F36/3 Pt 1.

35. ibid See also CSO F36/3 Pts 1 & 2 re. CSR's submissions on worker's compensation; and Knox to F.C.T. Lord, Nausori Private, 7.4.32, CSR 142/1092.

36. Lord, CSR Co Nausori, to Scott, 15.3.32, CSO F36/3 Pt 1; Managing Director EGM Co Ltd & Loloma (Fiji) GMNL (E.G. Theodore) to CS, 21.9.38, CSO F36/3 Pt 2.

37. Managing Director EGM Co Ltd & Loloma (Fiji) GMNL (E.G. Theodore) to CS, 21.9.38, CSO F36/3 Pt 2; Assistant General Manager to Chairman Fijian Labour Committee, 11.12.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

38. Nikola Rokocike to Roko Tui Ra, 5.10.37, SNA N 44/12/22; ibid General Manager (Godden) Loloma (Fiji) GMNL to DC Ba, 16.11.37; ibid Report by IOM, 24.11.38; IOM to Chairman Mining Board, T.T0.38, CSO F36/39/1; A.M. Raine to Theodore, 19.6.35, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar-Dec 1935.


40. ibid

41. CS to Adviser on Native Affairs, 16.11.38, CSO F16/42; ibid Acting Adviser on Native Affairs & Chairman Mining Board to CS, 24.11.38.
42. Managing Director (Theodore) to Wyn Roberts Prop. Ltd, Insurance Brokers Sydney, 20.2.40, Vat/Loloma Mine Employees Insurance; Medical Superintendent Makogai to DC Ra, 6.5.39, CSO F16/42; ibid DC Ra to Medical Superintendent Makogai, 16.5.39; ibid Medical Superintendent Makogai to Native Adviser Suva, 23.5.39.

43. IOM to Chairman Mining Board, 1.10.38, CSO F36/39/1. See also Mining Regulations 1934 (Reg 115).

44. IOM to Chairman Mining Board, 1.10.38, CSO F36/39/1.

45. Secretary for Native Affairs (A.A. Wright) to CS, 13.3.34, CSO F36/3 Pt 2.

46. See for example Leg Co Debates, M. Mudahar, Indian Member for the Northern and Western Division, 13.10.32; and C. Chattur Singh, Indian Member for Northwest Division, Nov 1938.

47. Council of Chiefs Resolution No 17, 1936. This was followed up in 1940. See Ratu Wainiu, H.W. Seniloli to Adviser on Native Affairs, 10.5.40, SNA N50/22/94A.

48. Attorney in Fiji to CS, 14.10.38, CSR 142/2561. Objections were also raised by the Acting Attorney General and the Mt Kasi Mining Co. Clerk Executive Council to CS minute, 28.4.34, CSO F36/3 Pt 2; ibid Acting Attorney General (Russell) to CS, 30.6.38; ibid General Manager Mt Kasi Mines Ltd to CS, 1.10.38.

49. Leg Co Debates, Attorney General, 23.5.40. The Colonial Office advised that worker and grower representatives be consulted as well as companies operating in the colonies. This was not complied with in Fiji, the only Fijian representative being a chief. Secretary of State for Colonies to Governor, Confidential Telegram No 95, 30.4.40, CSO F36/3-3.

50. See Leg Co Debates 27.5.40 and Ordinance No 23, 1940. Thirty and forty-two months were adopted as the basis of assessment in the Strait Settlements, Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana. The second schedule of the Fiji ordinance giving calculations (by %) of permanent partial incapacity was taken from the 1934 South African Act. See Leg Co Debate on Workers Compensation Bill, Attorney General, 23.5.40.

51. Attorney General, 27.4.40, CSO F36/3-3.

52. In 1946, the minimum period of incapacity necessary to be eligible for compensation was reduced from one week to four days in accordance with an ILO recommendation. After the fourth day, compensation was payable for the whole period of incapacity. (See Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Ordinance, No 16 1946). This of course still penalised the worker whose injury prevented him from working for less than four days and an objection to this was raised by the Dock Construction Union in 1962. Secretary/President Dock Construction Union to CS, 11.8.62, CSO F36/14. In 1964, the period was further reduced to three days. (See Workmen's Compensation Ordinance No 17, 1964).
53. Cayzer General Manager to Secretary FMWU, 20.4.53, Vat/.

54. W. Ormsby Gore to Officer Administering Government of Fiji, 25.8.37, CSO F36/3 Pt 2.

55. Safety Officer to General Manager Report - 19.9.51, 27.9.51, Vat/Emperor Period Reports July 1952-July 1953; Nilsen to Theodore, 4.12.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

56. A fatal accident involving a Fijian worker in 1944, for example, commanded full (100%) compensation. On the basis of 30 months earnings @ 5/- a day, compensation totalled only £195. Workers Compensation Claim, 18.12.44, Vat/Insurance Workers Compensation Current File.

57. From about 1945, compensation for death or total incapacity payable to those earning more than £375 p.a. (i.e. Europeans) was a sum equal to twice their earnings (during the preceding 12 months). Managing Director Theodore to L.B. Tomlins, Secretary EGM Melbourne, no date circa 1945, Vat/Insurance Workers Compensation Current File.

58. A. Creech-Jones to Officer Administering Government of Fiji Circular 12255/47, 7.1.48, CSO F36/3 Pt 4; ibid Labour Advisory Board Meeting 27.4.48; ibid Executive Council Circular No 116, 10.5.48; ibid Governor (Brian Freeston) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 7.6.48. See Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Ordinance, No 8 1948 giving effect to the proposed rise in the minimum rate.

59. Assistant Secretary Section A to Assistant CS, 3.5.48, CSO F36/3 Pt 4.

60. CSO F36/3 Pt 4.
Section V

1. Report of Commission to Fiji, August 1938, MMSA Cak A/4 (b) Fiji District Cakaudrove Circuit Correspondence Inwards & Outwards 1938.

2. ibid

3. Regulation with regard to women absenting themselves from their homes, No 1, 1887.


5. PC Colo North to Secretary for Native Affairs, 21.4.36, SNA N44/8/6; Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) to All PC, 14.4.37, SNA N44/8/11; Native Courts Code (Amendment) Regulation, No 2 1935; Extract from Minutes of Meeting of the Native Regulations Board, 25.3.37, SNA N44/8/11. Also see C.A.

6. Prosecutions under Native Regulation 4/1927 Section 83, SNA N44/8/11; see C.A.

7. See C.A.

8. Indian Medical Practitioner to Acting General Manager, 29.7.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-.

9. See C.A.

10. DC Colo North (S. Reay) to CS, 8.10.36, SNA N44/8/11.

11. See C.A.

12. See C.A.

13. Community Officer to General Manager, 31.10.40, Vat/LGMNL Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939-40.

14. J.L.V. Sukuna to Nilsen, 16.1.48, Vat/.

15. Cap 89, 1945; See Ordinance No 6, 1892 for early regulations and Fijian Affairs Regulation No 21, 1948, (Assemblies and Dances Regulation) for subsequent prohibition.


17. Half-castes also needed permission to hold dances. Community Officer (Garnett) to Lord memo, 30.4.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944; Welfare Officer Yarrow to Secretary Loloma Village Social Hall, 17.1.61, Vat/Community Sundries, Minutes Dept Managers Meetings Miscellaneous Memo; ibid Welfare Officer to Secretary Loloma Fijian Welfare Committee, 17.3.62. Also see C.A.

18. Managing Director Theodore to Secretary EGM, 2.3.40, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Dec 1939-June 1940.

19. Governor's Address 25.10.40, CP No 45, 1940.


23. Chief Engineer to General Manager, 6.9.39, Vat/LGMNL Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1939-40; ibid unsigned memorandum, 29.11.39.

24. Dunkin op. cit. p15

25. Chairman & Secretary Fijian Labour Committee to Acting General Manager, 30.10.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935–. ibid Assistant General Manager to Chairman Fijian Labour Committee, 11.12.36.

26. Memorandum on Native Sports @ Vatukoula, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Mar 1938–Sept 1939.

27. Contributions from EGM, Loloma & FMD Companies and Tobacco Profits Fund to Sports Clubs & Associations, 1.10.41, Vat/Fiji Mines Period Reports Finance etc 1940-42. The cost of maintaining the golf course was particularly high. Nilsen to Theodore (Sydney) memo, 4.12.39, Vat/Emperor General Correspondence Aug-Dec 1939.

28. For comparison with the role of education on the Rhodesian mines, see van Onselen op.cit. pp182-184.

29. For discussion of the education question (and specifically financing) see CSO F28/126 Pt 1, in particular correspondence between Director of Education and CS.


31. Vatukoula Fijian School Annual Reports for 1947 and 1948, Vat/Education; ibid E. Cullen to Cayzer, 4.7.52.

32. General Manager Nilsen to Chief Accountant memo, 31.12.41, Vat/; Emperor Fijian Committee to General Manager memo, 22.1.41, Vat/Dept Memos 1941–May 1944 Community Officer; ibid General Manager to Chief Accountant memo, 22.1.41, and Community Officer to General Manager, 9.2.42; Minutes of Dept Managers Meeting 9.8.44, Vat/Meetings of Executives - Current File.

33. Community Officer (Garrett) to General Manager, Report for period ending 22.1.41, Vat/Period Reports to Melbourne Office 1941; Community Officer to General Manager re. Meeting of Fijian Committee on 24.4.42, 25.4.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941–May 1944 Community Officer; E. Cullen to Cayzer, 4.7.52, Vat/Education.

34. This was administered and staffed by Catholic (Marist) sisters and catered for children between the ages of five and fifteen years.

36. ibid

37. Community Officer to General Manager, 25.6.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944; Fijian School Report June 1945, Vat/Education; Minutes of Dept Managers Meetings 28.2.46 & 10.10.45, Vat/Meetings of Executives - Current File; Director of Education to CS memo 10.6.46, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944.

38. General Manager Cayzer to CS, 26.6.50, Vat/Education; ibid Director of Education to General Manager, 8.11.50.
I Introduction: Communalism and the Other Faces of Protest

The system of labour exploitation and control in the mining industry created deep frustrations within the workforce. Resistance, though small scale until the 1950's, preceded by over a decade the formal organisation of mine labour into a union. It took a variety of forms - expressed not solely in the collective assaults on capital but also in passive and unorganised forms of protest. The latter were neither primitive nor irrational but, on the contrary, represented a 'rational' and often 'conscious' rejection of the racially defined structure of social and economic relations. In addition, sporadic outbursts of communal hostility and violence punctuated a seemingly sluggish industrial landscape. They too were 'an important index of working class frustration and despair' and so are also examined in this chapter. Indeed, the resilience of communal loyalties underpinning much of the conflict helped diminish the capacity of mine labour to pose an effective challenge to capital.

The weakness of labour resistance, and the dominance of a racial rather than a class ideology, owed much to the strategies which capital and the state deployed to safeguard a system of cheap labour. The principles of race discrimination in particular helped to foster cleavages within the working class. The privileges and
specifically the greater occupational and wage mobility of Rotumans and half-castes were explicit forms of material differentiation which did not exclude the two races from the working class but did mean that their productive relations with capital were less repressive. Promotion during the 1940's into jobs which gave them supervisory and disciplinary rights over Fijian labour drew them, moreover, into the structure of managerial control. As we shall see, 'aristocratic' status encouraged in both groups a willingness to defend their privileges by acting as strike breakers.

Beside the tractibility of half-castes and Rotumans, organised protest by Fijian mineworkers was decidedly more militant. It articulated an angry rejection of occupational discrimination and thus logically took a communal form. Above all, it was directed at acquiring for Fijians the wages and other benefits extended to half-castes and Rotumans. While representing a direct attack on capital, such efforts simultaneously brought Fijians into confrontation with those other races which appeared to be obstructive.

The organisational weakness of Fijian labour and the low level of class consciousness can also be explained by the structure of the mine labour market and the sovereignty of traditional cultural values. The transience of labour inherent in the migrant system and in contracts of short term employment did not preclude resistance, but did militate against organisation into a strong and cohesive body with a viable leadership. In particular, the contract system - in its de jure and de facto forms - posed a major obstacle to industrial combination for it disqualified a section of the
workforce from any kind of bargaining: the terms of employment, once
accepted at the outset of contracts, generally by chiefs, remained
fixed.

The Depression diminished further the bargaining power of
mineworkers. It created a surplus of labour which made Fijians
insecure and expendable; and because it led to competition for work,
discouraged a collective identity. It enabled management to
dispensewith workers on the slightest charge of inefficiency or
incompetence and facilitated its expulsion of any branded as
'troublemakers' or 'agitators'. When, in 1936 and 1938, social and
industrial unrest threatened to destabilise the industry, the
abundance of labour permitted capital the indulgence of repatriating
hundreds of workers to their villages. It replaced them with agility
and little dislocation of production. (see chapter three)

The unsatisfied demand for labour during the gold rush, it has been
noted, gave Fijian mineworkers a brief advantage over competitive
capital. This was demonstrated in their collective wage demands and
strike action. In June 1935, the Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL
described what had become an acute situation:

We are striking trouble with our labour. The ruling
rate is 2/- a day and food, but the natives are getting
shrewd and want 3/- and food. We dare not give it
because it will cause trouble elsewhere - the
Government only give 1/10 and food. Theodore struck
trouble some time back and gave in to them, raised
their wages in order to keep his Mill going. If
trouble arises the Government will have to step in and
settle it. 4

Wage collaboration between different forms of capital soon put the
lid on this early show of strength, and as earlier chapters have
shown, was reinforced by the monopoly which the Theodore group of companies came to command on the Tavua goldfield from the mid-1930's.

The ways in which the Fijian social system was used to mobilise and subsidise the cost of mine labour have already been examined. But mining capital also invested imaginative energy in integrating traditional social relations into its structure of labour control. Chiefs often accompanied groups of contracted workers and, apart from taking charge of monthly wage payments and determining how much individual workers could retain for their personal use, acted as overseers. This established, at little or no extra cost, a simple and easily managed network of communication and control premised on an accepted code of social behaviour. As the following sections demonstrate, provincial chiefs were also used to help defuse agitation, suppress strike action and calm other outbursts of industrial turbulence. They became crucial instruments of labour control, dispatched to the mines at the request of the companies and with the blessing of the colonial administration.

With the establishment of a Fijian labour committee in 1936, the role of resident chiefs and elders in the general management of labour was institutionalised. Through representatives of each province, the companies could monitor grievances relating to labour conditions. This had the twin advantages of strengthening their communication link with the workforce and facilitating labour discipline. It provided what Reay later described as a 'safety valve' designed to pre-empt the formation of a workers' union. The committee was also an important means of preserving traditional values and thus (indirectly) cushioned the dislocating effects of a
labour system which separated men from their families and village life and subjected them to an unfamiliar and demanding occupation. (see sections II & V)

Cultural influences were subtle yet powerful. Deference accorded by tradition to chiefs was adroitly fostered in the quite different circumstances of an industrial settlement. More important, under chiefly direction, this deference was extended to colonial officials and to employers of Fijian labour. In short, chiefs encouraged mineworkers to regard the companies as their benefactors and certainly not as the exploiters of their labour power. They projected themselves, as well as the colonial administration, as the valiant defenders of the economic interests and general welfare of labour. In turn, Fijian workers came to possess the illusory notion that the mines' management was their turaga. It was a celebrated anomaly, and one which helped to create a relatively quiescent workforce during the early years of mining and which was used to great effect to quell striking workers in 1938.

The strength of cultural values also had far reaching implications for the relationships forged between Fijian and other racial groups employed as mine labour. It encouraged Fijian workers to see themselves as part of a distinct racial group rather than as part of a working class, a tendency accentuated by language differences, especially their sparing command of English. By reinforcing provincial loyalties, this sense of cultural exclusivity also created divisions within the Fijian workforce itself. Some of these had bloody histories that long pre-dated the establishment of the industry. Nevertheless, 'faction fighting' at the mines and in particular the pitched battle of 1936 between workers from the
provinces of Ra and Tailevu cannot simply be explained in terms of traditional rivalries; nor can the (racial) violence of 1947 be reduced to '...innate antipathies or any biological bias' between different racial groups as implied by the government and the mining companies.11

What is suggested here is that hostilities between mineworkers were in large measure a product of life at Vatukoula. The hasty development of the mining community, its ethnic and regional diversity, and its disproportionate number of men, created special social pressures. And these aggravated the tensions existing within a congested community of people subjected to both social and economic discrimination. Adjustment to such a novel and alienating environment was fraught with problems; and provincial or racial identities offered a palliative – a sense of dignity and a feeling of security. For this reason, artificial barriers such as the provincial and racial segregation of single men's barracks, the pattern of separate family communities, segregated recreation, and the establishment of separate racial committees responsible for welfare matters, were not always resisted. In the long term, they made industrial bargaining on a racial basis logical and provided the impetus for the formation of an exclusively Fijian union in 1948.

The industrial stability and the control of Fijian wages during the 1930's and early 1940's were disrupted only by the communal clashes of 1936 and the unsuccessful strike of 1938. The industry's own forms of labour control were buttressed by an array of legislative, legal and administrative sanctions, and the services of a state police force. Official support indeed became crucial to the
companies' ability to stave off any challenge to their continued profitability.

The state's commitment to mining capitalism and its need to maintain a viable colonial economy necessitated intervention to protect the industry's system of cheap labour. Its initial role of procuring mine labour was thus extended by participation in the general discipline and control of that labour. And, although Fijian grievances were sometimes acknowledged as legitimate, action was directed overwhelmingly at the suppression of resistance, protection to strike breakers, the prevention of picketing, and the prosecution of strike leaders or other 'agitators'.

The combined force of state coercion, capital's strategies of labour control, the strength of communal loyalties and other factors discussed above, placed considerable constraints on organised working class protest. However, in looking at labour resistance, it is also necessary to examine what have been variously described as its 'covert', 'hidden' or 'silent' expressions. Passive protests, though often conducted individually and thus 'unorganised', provided a singlular measure of disaffection. They were as much a rejection of an authoritarian management as the more explicit attempts to acquire some position of influence over work relations. And although they may not be deemed 'obvious forms' of class consciousness or action, they do nonetheless need to be recognised as a meaningful reflection of how mineworkers themselves perceived their working conditions and habitually translated these perceptions into uncooperative behaviour. As Charles van Onselen has suggested in the case of Southern Rhodesia, 'unarticulated, unorganised protest and resistance' illuminated the actual working
of a 'labour-coercive economy' and 'formed the woof and warp of worker consciousness'. So too, it can be merged into the mainstream of open or articulated protest, for it fuelled antagonistic feelings that were sometimes acute and pervasive enough to spark off spontaneous forms of collective protest.

Characteristic responses, all of which brought either wage deductions or, more often dismissal, comprised some form of labour withdrawal or came under the category of 'insubordination'. The first of these included leaving a job without permission, irregular attendance (particularly failure to work for a few days following pay day), sleeping on the job, absence without leave, overstaying leave especially after the Christmas holidays, arriving late for work or missing shifts, skylarking, carelessness, inattention to a job, or a deliberate slow down (termed laziness). The second category included insolence, refusal to take a transfer or to work overtime, or generally disobeying instructions.

A number of these offences came under the generic terms of absenteeism and labour turnover, the high rates of which placed them amongst the more notable expressions of discontent. As chapter three has shown, the exigencies of communal work and chiefly tribute, and the political regulation of migrant labour movements, contributed significantly to the high turnover of Fijian mine labour especially during the 1930's. But the service record cards of individual workers show that, in addition, 'voluntary' discharge — declared and undeclared — was extraordinarily common. During the early and late 1940's when the demand for labour was more competitive and copra prices improved, labour could and did withdraw collectively; but even during the less favourable circumstances of
the late 1930's when there was a greater dependence on employment at the mines, batches of recruited labour occasionally returned home soon after beginning their contracts. Overall, however, this form of protest was usually an individual action.

It has been suggested of African wage earners that the 'rate of desertion depends on the degree of control exercised, but also, more saliently, on the degree of viability that remains to the pre-capitalist mode of production.' Certainly in Fiji, official and company correspondence indicate that the high incidence of labour withdrawal was probably a function of the limited use of contracts, if only because this activity was more prevalent amongst 'voluntary' or 'casual' workers.

On the other hand, the 'viability' of the provincial economies needs to be seen in conjunction with other factors such as the distance between labour suppling (home) districts and the mines, the comparative influence of non-economic forms of labour coercion such as taxation and pressures from local chiefs, and the state of the labour market generally - that is whether there existed opportunities for work outside the mining industry. All had some bearing on the 'rate of desertion'. For example, those provinces which displayed the highest rate of turnover at the Tavua goldfields - Colo North and Ra - were, paradoxically, those where the opportunities for commercial agriculture were least available; they were provinces whose proximity made it easier to run away.

Similarly, although distinct changes in the 'content' of Fijian protest can, as Sharon Stichter has argued in relation to Kenya, be
related to stages of proletarianisation, there is not the clear transition that she proposes from a 'permanent withdrawal of labour as a form of protest to withdrawal as a weapon of negotiation'.

Following the establishment of a permanent workforce in the 1940's, strike action became the predominant mode of protest. But, at the same time, 'permanent' labour withdrawal does not appear to have significantly declined. The statistics for turnover in 1947, for example, show that 67% of Fijians (totalling 417) discharged from the industry were voluntary. On the other hand, the early strikes of 1935 and 1938 demonstrated that Fijian mineworkers, while still predominantly transient, were willing and able as a group to confront capital with specific wage and other related demands.

The strength of cultural and racial loyalties had the complementary effect of defusing class consciousness and inciting provincial and racial animosity. Available evidence suggests that clashes between Fijians from different provinces and between Fijians and half-castes were not uncommon during the 1930's and 1940's. Detailed (official and company) accounts of such incidents are, however, restricted to just two spectacular outbursts of communal violence in 1936 and 1947. Only these cases led to official investigations and provoked consolidated acts of suppression.

What Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen claim to be the preconditions of state intervention in Southern Rhodesia - the threat to production and the danger of uncontrollable unrest extending beyond the mining compound - is to a certain extent true of state initiatives in the Fiji mining industry. One important point of difference, however, was that the latter appears to have been less reliant on preserving the existing 'pattern of labour
mobilization and control. A noticeable shift in the provincial/racial composition of the mine workforce, for example, followed the 1936/47 disturbances. (see chapter two)

The chapter gives some attention to the incidents of 1936 and 1947, not simply because they illuminate the acute provincial and racial tensions that existed in the industry, but also because, contrary to the official view, communal conflict was not extraneous to but was in large measure rooted in the particular pattern of social and economic relations that evolved in the mining industry. These incidents formed an important if indirect expression of labour protest.
II The 1936 'brawl' and its aftermath

Some time before midnight on Sunday 9th February 1936, the mining area of Vatukoula was shaken out of its slumber by the outburst of violent raids between the segregated labour lines of Ra and Tailevu mineworkers. A Ra man caught earlier in the day watching a group of Tailevu women bathing in the river had committed a serious offence against Fijian custom - one which traditionally called for severe retribution. The angry tide of verbal insults tossed provocatively between both sides finally burst into physical abuse and clashes of unprecedented fury.¹

Ra's numerical superiority and access to reinforcements scored the province an early victory. Its men, 'armed with drills, sticks and stones', forced their Tailevu opponents to retreat into the Koroboya hills behind the goldfields.² Though the expeditious arrival of police contingents from Ba, Tavua and Suva and the intervention of the roko tui of both provinces brought the fighting under control, a number of casualties and much damage to personal property were reported. Production at the Loloma mine was all but halted by the evacuation of 'intimidated' Tailevu and half-caste workers and their families; police were despatched into the hills in a vain pursuit of Tailevu fugitives; and on Thursday 13th, a fresh outbreak of trouble brought police reinforcements from Suva and claimed further victims.³

Faced with the possibility of continued fighting and more serious interference with production, the decision was taken to repatriate all Ra labour numbering nearly 200, and a part of the Tailevu workforce, to their villages.⁴ Such 'prompt action', the District
Commissioner Ba later claimed, '...was directly responsible for the successful suppression of the disturbance.'\textsuperscript{5} The hand of colonial law fell heavily on some of the offenders. On February 13th, twenty-six Ra men were found guilty of unlawful assembly, bringing imprisonment terms with hard labour of one month to ten men, and a £5 fine or, in default, one month imprisonment with hard labour to eleven others.\textsuperscript{6}

The conflict between mineworkers from the two largest labour supplying provinces raised important questions about their industrial relationship and their respective attitudes to a shared occupational discrimination. The dislocating effects of the migrant system were probably most acutely felt at this time. Alcohol consumption, gambling and prostitution were becoming widespread and undoubtedly placed a community caught in a system of low wages, congested living conditions and a harsh work routine under considerable strain. The inadequate bathing and toilet facilities denied Fijians the privacy necessary if traditional customs and tabu were to be respected; and in the workplace, dissatisfaction with the basic wage for underground labour had already become known through an (unsuccessful) demand for 'wet pay' a few months earlier.\textsuperscript{7}

Yet official and company accounts of the clashes detailed merely the horrifying drama ignited by a provincial indiscretion. Only cursory reference was made to the stoning of the European barracks;\textsuperscript{8} and although one government officer suggested that living conditions at the mines had contributed to provincial tensions,\textsuperscript{9} there was little to suggest that officialdom perceived the cause of the incident to be anything more than the longstanding feud between the two provinces.\textsuperscript{10}
To understand the events more fully, it is necessary to take a closer look at the structural conditions that existed in the labour market at the time of the 'brawl'. As detailed in chapter three, the economic circumstances that prevailed in the two provinces in early 1936 were extremely difficult: the compounding blows of depressed commodity prices, fewer job opportunities and high taxation created a climate of insecurity and competition for work. Ra contributed the largest single number of Fijian workers and had been one of the first provinces to be drawn into the mine labour market. Its acute shortage of unalienated arable land made it less resilient in the face of rising tax and other cash demands than many other provinces. It had a history of wage labour that pre-dated Cession.

The recruitment of labour from Tailevu came after Ra had established the mines as an important centre of employment for its taxpayers. Men came generally from districts where banana growing offered an alternative, if less lucrative, source of revenue. These more favourable circumstances may well have been resented by Ra workers. More important perhaps, it appeared that Tailevu men were preferred for the more responsible and therefore higher paying jobs available to Fijians. Even before the February violence, the two provinces had come to blows over this. It was raised as a bargaining point in the early stages of the 1936 dispute when Ra combatants agreed to return to camp on condition that certain Tailevu men were dismissed. 11

If the violation of a tabu precipitated the 'brawl', consideration of other, economic and occupational, factors would thus seem to be crucial to the understanding of community tensions that exploded
into clashes of such intensity. Phimister and van Onselen conclude of a 'faction fight' in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia in 1929 that it 'was very largely an expression of competition within the working class about limited job opportunities'. They go further to suggest that 'faction fights' in general can be interpreted as intra-working class eruptions which occur in colonial urban ghettos when there is restructuring of a labour market in which employment, to differing degrees, is 'ethnically' defined by employers and/or by workers. Violence is most likely in recessions or depressions when intra-working class competition for jobs is most intense, and when lumpen and unemployed elements in the ghetto (themselves often with a distinctive ethnic identity) initiate conflict and swell the ranks of the combatants.

The 'most menacing riot' of 1936 on the Tavua gold field strikes a similar chord. On the other hand, an interpretation of the events needs to recognise the importance of culture as an influence on the behaviour of Fijian mine labour at this time. For, while similar economic conditions - notably a glutted labour market and retrenchments of Fijian labour - prevailed during the 1950's and 1960's, these years did not witness intra-provincial violence on a like scale. It was around the same period that traditional values ceased to claim such ideological pre-eminence.

State suppression of the strike and the charges brought against its leaders were backed up by a proposal of Ratu Sukuna that a Fijian of 'rank' or a Fijian-speaking European officer respected by the Fijian people be appointed to investigate and mediate in any similar disputes at the mines. His suggestion won the support of the Mining Board and the Native Administration although both considered it prudent to make it a company rather than a government appointment. Theodore, however, set in train the establishment of separate
racial committees as an alternative solution. In the case of Fijian labour this appears to have been delayed; and a letter from a group of ten workers in September 1936 suggests that the impetus for collective representation did not, in fact, come from management.

The Fijian request for a forum coincided with a strike of about 60 half-caste workers which won the active support of 54 Fijian sympathisers. Theodore agreed to recognise a committee appointed by the Fijian workforce and to consult it over 'communal matters'. The committee held its first meeting soon after, and from then on, made regular submissions to improve both the working and living conditions of Fijians. One of its earliest requests was that work on Sunday be optional rather than 'forced'. It was presented skilfully, combining a judicious tone of deference with a disarming logic:

As you know Sir, the Catholic and Methodist Missions are very strict in observing the Sabbath. If you look at this matter from our point of view you no doubt will agree that since we have exchanged our old beliefs for the religions brought by the white missionaries we must be true to those new beliefs otherwise we are true to none.

Other matters raised included complaints over wage deductions for poor time-keeping or legitimate absenteeism; criticism of the action taken (as part of the campaign to expel 'undesirables') against women who came to the mines to cook and wash for their male relatives; complaints about rations; and proposals to improve the water, kitchen, bathing and recreational facilities.

But demands were not confined to matters of general welfare or to marginal improvements in the terms of Fijian employment. Two
incidents in particular aired the mounting objections to the iniquity of occupational and wage discrimination. In 1936, the committee demanded details of half-caste work requirements underground, protesting that

The native have use [sic] the machines and also shovelling and the Half-Caste boys just walk about and do whatever they like. 19

The following year, it organised a deputation of workers to demand a wage increase for all Fijian labour (including surface workers) after six months employment. 20 The occasions marked the extent to which Fijians had become aware that as a homogeneous group they bore the brunt of production demands; they highlighted the (objective) economic considerations that nurtured Fijian hostility towards half-castes; and they sowed the seeds of discontent which erupted quite suddenly into the strike of 1938.
III The 1938 Strike

In November 1938, following two fatal underground accidents, Fijian workers on the Emperor and Loloma mines staged their first concerted strike. Their ability to orchestrate a quick and large scale withdrawal of labour, their restrained dialogue, and the absence of disorder despite the provocation of a police presence, distinguished the strike as an early landmark in the industrial history of goldmining in the colony. It consolidated the commitment of Fijians to combined resistance and showed clearly that an organised withdrawal of labour by strike action was now recognised as a useful industrial weapon. Though Ra men were held to be responsible for the stoppage, the prominent strike leaders came from several different regions including Tailevu, Yasawa, Vanua Levu, Nadi and Colo North as well as Ra.¹

The strike brought out a number of grievances including the ineligibility of most Fijians for accident compensation and the inferior quality of rations at the Emperor mine. Above all, the focal points of attack were the low level of Fijian wages, the mechanics of (Fijian) wage control, and the injustice of income differentials between the various racial groups.² Government and company officials were agreed that there had been 'an undercurrent of discontent' simmering for several months.³

The strikers revealed their acute perception of the exploitative relations in the industry by rejecting a system of earnings which did not take adequate account of skills and experience. Despite the recommendations of supervisors, increases prescribed even under the restricted terms of their employment schedule had not, they noted,
been approved; and where adjustments were made, they were not backdated. The practice of reducing the wages or downgrading the classifications of workers who left the mines to visit their villages similarly came under attack. These men, the strikers demanded, were entitled to be re-engaged as skilled not as unskilled labour.4

In defence, Nilsen produced records of authorised increases, evidence which clearly satisfied the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police, I.E. Lucchinelli,5 but about which the District Commissioner Central, R.N. Caldwell, was, with good reason, more circumspect:

He was very elusive and showed me many records of increases of pay—recommendations for increase of pay from shift bosses that he had approved of. I examined many different pay sheets and there are certainly a fair amount of increases but a good deal with no increases. 6

The companies' case rested ultimately on the interpretation of 'satisfactory' service, which they insisted was their prerogative.7

The claim cut no ice with the striking workers who astutely pointed out its contradictions:

...if they are kept on at the mine after their six months' period they have automatically qualified as being satisfactory, otherwise they would have been discharged, and are therefore entitled to their increments. 8

The introduction of Rotumans into the workforce was another bone of contention. Although they came as 'raw recruits' and were initially under Fijian instruction and supervision, they were, as noted earlier, classified as half-castes and thus on higher rates of pay.9

For their part, the companies claimed that Rotumans were engaged in raising (mining undertaken at an inclining angle which required greater skill and was generally more dangerous than horizontal
drilling). Nilsen pressed the conventional charge of racial stereotypes in support of this policy: Fijians did not, he claimed, possess the appropriate qualities for raising - 'the requisite nerve and steadiness'. The inquiries of the Inspector of Mines, Frank White, revealed, however, that few Rotumans had in fact been allocated to this work, a situation all the more likely given the brevity of their employment and because 'it was the experience on other mines that certain of the Fijians were most suitable for such work.'

White's view was that the payment of higher wages to Rotumans was indefensible and impolitic and he was supported by Lucchinelli. Despite this, the companies' case was not formally contested. Indeed, wage discrimination was tacitly supported on the grounds that '...a Coy must be allowed to pay according to what it thinks is the best type of labour...' The bald depreciation of Fijian work abilities was similarly unrepudiated. On the contrary, it was upheld as an apposite bias for, as the Colonial Secretary, Juxon Barton, argued, it was '...the general opinion here that Polynesians are more reliable, & often better workers than Melanesians.'

Official debate over Fijian wages left White (and the Mining Board who endorsed all his proposals) even more out on a limb. A general increase raised the spectre of 'repercussions on other industries which must follow were the Company inclined to accede to their request'. White's proposal that a minimum underground wage of 2/6 should, in accordance with Australian practice,

...apply only to shovellers, truckers, and the like, but that men engaged on rock drills or in 'raising', winzing, stoping, driving, [i.e. skilled machine work] and in wet places, should receive slight increases...
went to the heart of the Fijian wage structure. Not surprisingly, it was strongly resisted. It was 'best', Barton noted, '...not to tinker with a minimum wage' and

What we need is not advanced (white) Australian practice but S. African for analysis. 16

The industry's cheap labour system won further support from the administration. Both the Inspector of Mines and the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police advised that an employer's liability for occupational accidents be acknowledged by the introduction of a compensation scheme which would cover all Fijians.17 This proposal too was shelved. In the final analysis, the government's recommendations were unequivocably modest. The mining companies were instructed to compensate the families of the two fatal accidents at approved rates; to provide a Fijian translation of the 1936 wages schedule; and to investigate their records with a view to approving increases in cases which had been overlooked and where 'skill and length of service' warranted them.18 By the end of the year, management claimed that it had fulfilled all its obligations in respect of the last of these directives.19 But in the long term, it was at liberty to pursue a policy which scorned 'length of service' as a criterion of wage adjustments, and defined 'skill' on the basis of racist preconceptions and managerial discretion.

The 1938 strike won no general wage increase nor did it succeed in dismantling the discriminatory structure of earnings. What it did do was to force the companies to repatriate the group of Rotumans whose arrival had helped to trigger the strike, and to desist from further recruitment for many years.20 The strike failed not because of any weakness of numbers or determination but because of the force
of the state apparatus used to quell it. The 1936 disturbances had set the pattern for political intervention; and the strike confirmed that any perceived threat to the exploitation of a now acclaimed colonial asset would cause the state to throw its optimum weight behind mining capital. It was thus tested against the influence of prominent chiefs (and to a lesser extent European officers) as well as the armed constabulary.

Barton's first advice to the Governor on learning of the strike was against intervention:

If as seems the case, the Fijians are merely seeking to capitalize the accidental death of a labourer they deserve precisely no sympathy; & in the event, the manager is right in paying off...I am opposed to Govt interfering between master & servant(s) at this stage. 21

Fears that the return of dismissed strikers to their provinces might extend the hostilities into the rural areas, however, impressed upon the government the imprudence of remaining aloof from problems at the mines. The absence of 'all Fijian leaders...[including those from Ra and Tailevu] from their centres' at the time of the strike on account of a Council of Chiefs meeting in Somosomo, Taveuni, prompted Barton to order their immediate return. 22 Ratu Isireli Tawake and Ratu Tiale Vuiyasawa, the Roko Tui Tailevu and Ra, were charged with a specific mission: '...to discuss the matters fully with the natives and endeavour to persuade them to return to work', the 'method' and 'procedure' being 'purely those of conciliation'. 23 Together with H.H. Ragg, Legislative Council member for the northwest division, Caldwell and Hedstrom, they addressed large crowds of disaffected workers, canvassed Fijian opinion, and appealed for an end to the strike. 24
The chiefs excelled in their task, assuring the strikers that the wages and food available at the mines could not be matched elsewhere on the labour market, and appealing to provincial loyalties and national pride to refrain from what was regarded as no more than an ignominious display of bad behaviour. It was, they argued, for the government to investigate whatever grievances they might have. Caldwell did not exhibit the blinkered devotion to the company cause that Nilsen would have liked and expressed disapproval of 'Bruiser's' uncompromising attitude and offensive manner.²⁵ His address to 200 strikers nonetheless pressed traditional values, a conservative ideology and his own (declared) belief in the fair play of the administration:

I then addressed them and first told them I regretted the action that they had taken, that it was not the proper way to have any grievances adjusted and they had placed themselves in a very shameful position. That the Government was always prepared to see that they had fair treatment. I told them that the correct and gentlemanly course was to return to their work and to abide by my advice and that any grievances would be thoroughly gone into and if they were genuine would be adjusted...The meeting was very orderly, no unpleasant circumstances and I felt that the situation looked brighter. ²⁶

Significantly, the police arrived at the mines not in response to an outbreak of violence but following the refusal of Emperor workers to continue at their jobs once their demands had been rejected. Between 31st October and 12th November, patrols were assembled from Ba, Lautoka and Suva. They were extended to intercept vehicles seeking entry to the mines when it was rumoured that dismissed Ra strikers intended to return to stop production at the Emperor Mill; and were doubled on some nights to protect those who were persuaded to return to work. Police support enabled the companies to expel 'the majority of agitators' to their villages, and to offer
protection to half-castes, Rotumans and Fijians who did not participate or who agreed to return to work, and a newly recruited batch of Fijian labour from the province of Nadroga. More important it enabled production in the mills to continue, the significance of which was keenly grasped by Lucchinelli:

In conclusion I venture to say that the strikers had not lost sight of the fact that if, by intimidation or violence, they could have prevented the Half caste employees from assisting in keeping both Mills working, as they did throughout, their hopes of success would have been considerably enhanced. That nothing of this nature eventuated I attributed to the presence of the detachment. 27

According to White, 'the presence of armed police did not tend to make things easier, and the reinforcements brought in from Suva following the breakdown of talks with the strikers were visibly resented' by the Fijians. 28 There was nothing, however, to suggest that official support for the manoeuvres wavered in retrospect. Making another of his curt observations, Barton spurned White's comment on the Fijian reaction to 'armed police' and 'rifles...on the spot', insisting that 'An unarmed police force on these occasions invites more trouble.' 29

By 12th November, following at least two addresses and early deadlock, the first signs of defeat of the strike emerged as 150 men reported to work. The 'special duty' detachment of police from the capital, however, remained at the mines until the 17th, after which only one officer and six constables were retained. 30 Labour returned on the old terms. It capitulated in the face of the political and armed intervention of the state and, no doubt, out of sheer economic necessity. Flushed with success, the companies advised their Australian shareholders that following
'...negotiations, and with the aid of several of their important influential chiefs, [the strikers] were induced to resume work.' (my emphasis)\textsuperscript{31}

The 1938 strike signalled an explicit defence of Fijian productivity and skills. Though its thrust was communal, it nonetheless posed a direct attack on what has been termed 'the distribution of...product'.\textsuperscript{32} It was essentially because this distribution was racially structured that protest took a racial form. The use of half-castes and Rotumans as strike breakers inflamed Fijian opinion and ensured that the polarities which capital had successfully created would continue for some time to militate against working class unity.
Through the following decade, Fijian mineworkers exhibited a growing resentment of the debased and discriminatory estimation of their labour value. With the production of gold hampered by the shortages of labour and supplies during and immediately after the war, the Theodore group sought to contain the threatened slide in profits by increasing the productivity of workers while simultaneously reducing labour costs. Longer hours were worked and the right to one day's rest a week was withdrawn. A large proportion of the workforce thus worked a seven day week with overtime at ordinary rates of pay. In addition, wage demands were resisted, a more stringent discipline imposed - or 'a gradual tightening-up' as Nilsen called it - and local manpower was required to perform more skilled work but at discriminatory rates of pay.

The tensions resulting from these excessive demands were exacerbated by the sharp rise in living costs which made it increasingly difficult for Fijians to meet even basic subsistence needs. The increase in provincial tax levies from the mid-1940's diminished the net benefits (as well as the real value) of employment in the industry still further. Management, moreover, paid less attention to conditions outside the workplace. In particular, its abandonment of organised sporting activities during the war gave Fijian workers little opportunity for distraction from the frustrations of a more demanding work routine.

The competition over women - expressed violently and leading on occasion to provincial fights - was aggravated by the manufacture and sale of 'home brew' liquor by half-castes, the influx of
American soldiers into the neighbouring district of Nadarivatu and the establishment of an army camp at Vatukoula itself. Following demobilisation and the absorption into the mine workforce of returned soldiers, the liquor trade expanded; there was a marked increase in the consumption of alcohol on the field as well as gambling. Collective withdrawals of labour during the war were symptomatic of the mounting dissatisfaction and unrest. Chapters three and four have discussed how they were made possible by the rapid expansion of job opportunities and competitive wages outside the mining industry; and have outlined the means by which the administration sought to nip such resistance in the bud.

The influence of European (mainly Australian) agitation on the attitudes of Fijian mineworkers is not easy to estimate. Certainly the mines' management became increasingly solicitous through the early 1940's of the unsettling effect of association between European and local labour. European talk of unionisation caused particular alarm; and overall, it was likely that complaints from this group about working conditions, overtime rates and the rising cost of living both during and after the war, as well as the agitation by half-castes for European wages, sharpened Fijian sensitivities to the injustice of their own position.

So too, local tensions were probably heightened by the industrial unrest erupting amongst Fijian and Indian wage earners in other parts of the colony. General discontent over conditions of employment and declining living standards was starkly exposed in a strike of Fijian and Indian workers at the Mt Kasi mine in May 1941, the strike of airport workers in the west of Viti Levu in 1942, a protracted canefarmers strike in 1943, and a successful strike of
Fijian labour at the CSR cattle station of Yaqara in the neighbouring province of Ra in August 1946.®

Labour protest in the mining industry appeared to take a more articulated form around this time, exemplified in the submissions of the Na Viti Cauravou - the Young Fijian Society - founded as a colony-wide organisation in 1920. As in 1938, complaints were directed at the racial index of mine earnings as well as at the declining value of Fijian wages. In 1943, a meeting of the associated Loloma and Matanagata branches of the society raised two specific grievances with the colonial government: the fact that Fijians had not been granted a wartime cost of living bonus until 1943, over two years after other races; and that, when finally approved for Fijian workers, holiday pay was discriminatory. 9

Available evidence does not make it possible to calculate the support which the society had amongst Fijian mineworkers nor the extent to which its membership formed the basis of the union established some years later. The society's chairman, Epeli Uluiviti, was, however, to become an executive union officer; and its principal aim - 'of promoting the welfare of the Fijian race' - expressed the communal sentiment behind the early activities of the union. 10 The society did not represent wage earners alone but, as the Commissioner of Labour warned the mining companies, 'it does interest itself in labour conditions of Fijians'. 11 That the younger generation of Fijian workers dominated the (1947) strike which preceded the birth of the union also suggests that the society was more than likely a focal point of collective organisation and resistance, paving the way for later developments.
The socially disruptive effects of the war and the threat of combined Fijian and Indian agitation elicited new political initiatives. Two important pieces of industrial legislation — the Industrial Associations and Industrial Disputes (Conciliation and Arbitration) bills — were introduced to the legislature in 1941. They represented the fruition of metropolitan attempts (over a period of some ten years) to win the local government over to a pragmatic industrial policy. While it tinkered with fashionable (international) notions of labour reform, Colonial Office policy was directed above all at the critical question of labour control. This was illustrated well in a despatch from the Secretary of State in 1937 which outlined the dangers of obstructing the formation of labour unions:

> It should be realised that the prohibition of trade unions or the subjection of them to disabilities which used to be imposed by the Common Law in England, but which are now altogether obsolete is almost certain to encourage the formation of illegal organisations which may easily develop into 'secret societies' and extend their operations into the political field. A policy of restriction in this respect may therefore give direct encouragement to the formation of extremist associations. 13

Such reasoning made little impact on the local administration before the turn of the decade. Behind the delays in introducing both pieces of legislation lay the sustained and 'bitter opposition from commercial interests', notably the CSR monopoly and later the mining companies. It was the 'emphatic' belief of the sugar company that legislation which provided for the formation of associations was 'a grave mistake', 'ill-conceived' and 'potentially harmful'.

Solicitous of the implications for its future profitability, and in particular the likelihood that industrial demands would follow the
formation of trade unions, the company had threatened retaliatory measures against its contracted cane farmers in 1932. Its opposition did not waver in response to the government's second attempt in 1940 to comply with instructions from the Colonial Office. Working through H.H. Ragg who 'realizes thoroughly, first, that his own position, and secondly the Island's future is wrapped up with the Company's success in Fiji', and directly with Barton and the Governor, the company registered further protest. It claimed that the ordinances would foster rather than contain labour unrest since machinery proposed for the settlement of grievances would encourage labour to air them. Formally organised, labour was likely to agitate for parity of wages and conditions between the different races. This, of course, was out of the question:

It is apparent that such a demand could not be conceded for it would become impossible for the principal industries of the Colony to carry on.

The mining companies took similar exception to draft legislation which recognised trade unions. But Theodore presented the Governor with a more persuasive argument: the incompatibility of trade union principles with the traditional values of Fijian society. Evidently, Theodore's background as a trade unionist and Labour Premier in Australia were sufficient grounds to recommend this thesis, although the substance of his defence also found favour with Ratu Sukuna and the other Native members of the Legislative Council. For the Secretary of State, however, Theodore's ideological posture had little appeal and the reasons for Fijian opposition were all but obvious:

The idea that the sudden introduction of trade union ideas would forthwith wreck the existing Fijian communal village system is completely incomprehensible to me. The ordinary Fijian villager would not understand what was meant in the least by trades unions and there would certainly be no agitation among the
Fijian commoners to start one. They are much too feudally minded, and would not dream of taking a 'policy' decision of this kind without definite instructions from their chiefs. Indeed, it may be that here is the explanation of the Fijian members (who are all high chiefs) taking their stand against the legislation. They may feel that, although the immediate danger is small, their privileged position as feudal overlords may ultimately be endangered. 21

The combined pressure of the mining companies and the CSR to defer the legislation until after the war failed in spite of the initial concurrence of the incumbent Governor, Sir Harry Luke, and the tenacious opposition of European council members like Crompton and Ragg. 22 With the outbreak of the Pacific war, metropolitan opinion had come to claim greater favour amongst local government officials. The deployment of (incoming) 'white labour' on defence construction work at Nadi airport threatened to destabilise the industrial climate primarily because of its much higher wage structure. It was this unpalatable fact, Luke advised the Secretary of State, that has caused my advisers and myself some uneasiness; and it is probable that this development will have a permanent influence on the outlook of the labouring classes in this colony particularly of the artisan class, including those of mixed descent. The situation is aggravated by a general rise in the cost of living. 23

The airport workers' strike of 1942 confirmed the government's worst suspicions and even raised fears of the potential threat to the colony's defence if the agitation became more widespread. 'The risk, and the difficulty of calculation,' Reay argued, were 'greater where labour [was] unorganised than where it [was] organised'. 24 The strike revealed the organisational skills and discipline of wage labour — that
Fijians as well as Indians can combine against an employer just as effectively without this legislation... Each native province was represented by its recognised leader, and the Indians by men who were presumably elected. Rank and file obeyed these leaders. 25

Without the support of arbitration legislation, the state had been 'powerless' to enforce the (two) settlements reached with the strikers and to prevent large scale picketing. 26 In the sugar industry, the strength, solidarity and ideological cohesiveness of the sugar growers' organisation, the Kisan Sangh, despite the CSR's refusal to recognise it and unrelenting efforts to suppress it, also signalled the urgent need to enact both ordinances. 27

It was hardly surprising that, in such circumstances, the metropolitan view of trade union legislation as an instrument of labour control should be endorsed by the colonial government by the early 1940's. The presentation of the Industrial Associations Bill not only echoed the sentiment of the 1937 circular but adopted very similar language. The ordinance was imperative, the Attorney-General impressed upon the Legislative Council, for

...if such associations are not guided sympathetically along the right lines especially in their initial stages, then there is a danger that they may get into the hands of agitators of different kinds... 28

Two provisions demonstrated the parameters of industrial combination. An association was confined to a particular industry, the definition of which included a general trade or occupation; 29 and, following the South African example, membership (excluding the President and Secretary) was restricted to those 'regularly and normally engaged in the industry.' 30 The object of both conditions was to pre-empt any attempt by 'politically-minded persons...to
dominate and use our associations to further their own political ends. Under section 21 of the ordinance, picketing also became a criminal offence.

In similar fashion, the Industrial Disputes (Conciliation and Arbitration) Ordinance defined boundaries of industrial defence that would prevent a recurrence of the 1942 (airport strike) fiasco. The ordinance made the decision of an appointed arbitration court 'final and binding' and inflicted penal sanctions – a fine of £50 or 6 months imprisonment in default – on those who violated it. The repeated application of the ordinance to the mining industry through the 1950's and 1960's was to have a crippling effect on organised resistance. (see chapter seven)
A massive strike brought production at Vatukoula to a complete standstill towards the end of 1947. On 9th December, following the dismissal of one Tevita Ratoto, an underground mineworker from Nailaga in Ba, about 300 workers stopped work. By the following day numbers had swelled to over 1,000. The outburst of verbal abuse and physical assaults on property and people was reminiscent of the 1936 fracas; but the explosion this time was attended by massive strike action, an even greater scale of violence, and had a much broader platform.

As in 1936, the predominant view of the strike — shared by management, investigating police and other district and central government officers — tended to highlight the communal violence this time directed at the half-caste community, and the general 'lawlessness', 'hooliganism' and 'mob hysteria'. The absence of a coherent set of demands for improved conditions of employment lent further credence to the view that the 'ugly' incidents had not stemmed from industrial discontent. Official reports did not conclusively dismiss this as a contributing cause, but they nevertheless focussed on the strained relations between the two communities and, to a lesser extent, on the breakdown of communication between management and the workforce. The Governor's despatch to the Colonial Office reporting the strike stressed the fact that it was not over pay and conditions of employment but over social and other non-economic issues.
To be sure, racial antagonism formed a pertinent backdrop to the riots. The intensity of Fijian aggression and the vehemence with which the half-caste community was driven off the minefield were, however, propagated by an oppressive industrial environment and severe managerial discipline. The companies' administration of boxing activities, their surveillance of dances and their close collaboration with the local police over the supervision of social functions as well as in other matters, indeed emerged as a direct cause of the rising communal tensions in the months leading up to the disturbances. There was much resentment of the paternalistic attitudes of Europeans and the scant attention which management gave to Fijian needs. Living conditions, one government officer conceded, were 'by no means as good as they [were] made out' and were compounded by the 'strict colour bar which [extended] to the Euronesians'.

Prior to the strike, management made available to Fijian and half-caste boxing enthusiasts an empty barracks in the 'Euronesian lines'. Practices were segregated and the Fijians given the late night session. Following complaints of the half-caste community that they could not sleep, the gymnasium was closed. This peremptory decision provoked considerable 'bitterness' amongst Fijians, already frustrated by the difficulty of meeting the cost of tickets for the big fights periodically organised at the mines. They retaliated against the half-caste community by banning the latter from their dances.

There the problem did not rest for about three-quarters of married half-caste mineworkers were married to Fijian women and there appears to have been some disagreement over the classification of
Rotumans. It was, in fact, on a charge of misbehaviour at a Fijian dance following the ban - his threat to assault a Rotuman seeking admission - that Tevita was dismissed. Tevita was himself a keen boxer and it was a group of about fifty of his friends, supporters and 'boxing fans' who initially rallied to demand his reinstatement as well as the dismissals of both the community officer responsible for his discharge and the two Fijian assistants held to have lodged the complaint against him. It was Tevita's group which formed the core of the strike.6

If social tensions took a racial form, and Fijians sought 'to pay off some old scores' during the course of the strike,7 the timing of their assaults was telling of how the 'racial' factor was a secondary cause of the December events. Although by the second day of the strike, management agreed to reinstate Tevita, deadlock remained over the fate of the two Fijian assistants.8 It was in the wake of this situation and the refusal of half-castes, Rotumans, Indians and Europeans to join the strike, thus enabling the companies to maintain essential services, that the strikers unleashed their anger.9

Raids were conducted on the half-caste barracks, their furniture 'upturned' and broken, and men assaulted. There was, however, 'no general hostility on the part of the Fijians towards the Part-European community as a whole only towards a small group.' 10 Indian taxi drivers and bus owners at Tavua reported threatened retribution only if they helped transport half-caste fugitives out of the mine area; Fijian domestic servants were also 'intimidated' into leaving their jobs; and 'unanimous hatred' was directed at the community officer's Fijian assistants. Management personnel,
company property, the police and to a lesser extent the European community, did not escape the strikers' vengeance. There was stoning of '...the main offices, garages and trucks, dispensary and ambulance station, and the District Officer's station-waggon breaking windows and holing walls.'

According to Nilsen, the men sang a 'victory song' as they went.

Richard Hymen has argued that 'the labour market is more than a forum for narrowly economic processes of supply and demand: it involves relations of power and control'; and that it is in this broader sense that the market influences the forms of conflict that emerge. The 1947 strike at Vatukoula provides a good demonstration of this. Above all, it was an emphatic protest over the authoritarian structure of labour control in the mining industry. The motivating force behind the communal violence was a desire to mobilise a concerted show of strength against management. As Dipesh Chakrabarty has noted of industrial conflict in the jute mills of Bengal, protest became 'a ceremony of defiance' and physical violence was itself '...an acknowledgement of the way authority was represented...In the very nature of defiance was mirrored the nature of authority.'

Nilsen privately confessed that '...each European employee on the staff has been acting as a policeman...' and the Commissioner of Labour admitted that Fijians were discharged 'too readily', an opinion reiterated later in court when defence counsel claimed that 'wholesale dismissals' had taken place 'without reason'. Tevita's dismissal proved to be a case in point. What followed were specific charges against the community officer, his assistants and the police; the demand that the community officer's disciplinary powers
be withdrawn and that he and his 'informants' be replaced by men 'acceptable to themselves, that is their own nominees, and not those selected by the Company'; and physical assaults on the symbols or instruments of managerial control. Attacks on the police in particular reflected a long standing resentment of these 'servants of the Company' whose task was to 'rid(ding) the field of dismissed employees' - 'railroading' as it was described in court. Even in the opinion of one investigating official, this was an objectionable collusion which 'smell[t] strongly of American labour methods by which Company Police enforce discipline among labour, such actions often being backed by State Police.'

The presence of the police on the field during the strike then merely brought a festering sore to a head. By the evening of 9th December, the small local detachment had been reinforced by contingents from Lautoka and Suva. By the 11th, further armed reinforcements arrived from the capital bringing the total force to nearly one hundred. When two Fijians were taken for questioning over alleged intimidation, a 'mob' of between 200 and 300 (subsequently increased to 400) descended on the police station armed with sticks to demand their release. The station and the police themselves were stoned causing injury to four Fijian constables. According to Nilsen, men later '...went around in bands shouting "we will kill all the police'.

Ratu Sukuna's undertaking to ensure the withdrawal of the police from the field signalled an important victory for the strikers; and though delays in effecting the retreat provoked further angry demonstrations by a large crowd 'armed with sticks, masked, and
otherwise disguised' overnight, it was, the local district officer concluded.

As far as the reckless and hooligan element amongst the strikers was concerned...an absolute moral victory for them as they had defied the Police, practically confined them to the Police Station, and then having requested their withdrawal, had the pleasure of seeing the Police move off in accordance with their wishes. 21

In the aftermath of the strike, it transpired that considerable dissatisfaction with living and working conditions did in fact underlie the hostilities. The first meeting of the newly formed Fijian Committee presented a wide range of longstanding grievances including the overcrowding of barracks, unsatisfactory drainage, inadequate washing facilities, the sleeping problems of shift workers, and the ubiquity of bed bugs. A request for parity between Fijian and half-caste holidays touched the sensitive nerve of a more fundamental defence of Fijian productivity. And it was learnt that workers proposed to demand an end to all discrimination in the earnings of the two races in the new year. 22 There were rumours too that a general strike for higher wages was to be staged following the Christmas break.

The organisation of the strike and the tactical skills of its leadership were themselves indicative of a crystallising group consciousness. The recent strike by airport workers was believed to have influenced the pattern of events at the mines; and indeed one government officer recorded that '...reference to a forthcoming strike at the Mines was made by the secretary of the Airport Union during the Nadi strike.' 23 Nilsen's opinion was more fanciful: 'strikes', he declared, 'like diseases ... spread without provocation...' 24
The efficiency, calm and speed with which labour was withdrawn suggested careful planning. One description of the manoeuvres following the initial protest of Tevita's supporters captured this well:

Shortly after 1 p.m., the crowd, now augmented by others who had come off duty and numbering about 150-200, went to Emperor Mill and called on a number of men who were working there to stop; this they did. They then followed the same procedure at the Power House, the Construction Dept., and the Fitting Shop. At Loloma shaft they met the shift boys coming up and gathered them in; no boys went on the next shift. The same thing happened at the Wallace Smith shaft at Emperor... All this was done in a very orderly manner and at times even a nod of the head would stop a Fijian from continuing his work. As the Fijians stopped work the older hands went straight home while the younger generation swelled the crowds.

Money was also raised by the strikers in the form of two collections, the first of 1/- a head made in the early stage of the strike and the second of 5/- on pay day following the return to work. It was believed by 'some reliable sources' that they were to fund a strike for better wages and by others that they were 'intended to brief counsel to form a Union'. Though there was some doubt within the administration as to the 'real' reasons for the levies, the registration of the Fijian Mineworkers Union some two months later lent credence to what were two quite compatible testimonies. The recollections of mineworkers today make it clear that the desire for a union was expressed to Ratu Sukuna during the strike and that the latter had agreed 'to make one sogosogo [association] so you can have a voice.'

There is no evidence to show that the rapid growth in the colony's trade union movement from the mid-1940's, and in particular the registration of the Nadi Aerodrome Workers' Union and the Fiji
Stevedores Union in 1947, had any direct impact on the mineworkers' pressure for unionisation. Yet it would seem probable that these important developments had at least some indirect influence.

The leadership of the strike and the extent and basis of its support suggests that the events of 1947 marked an important turning point in the relationship between labour and capital. It was a change resulting not only from the increasing immiseration of the workforce but also from the changing structure of the mine labour market itself. A new generation of Fijian labour raised at the goldfields had been socialised outside the traditional environment of the village. It was less easily harnessed by customary sanctions. The stabilisation of labour itself created the conditions for industrial organisation, but the declining influence of cultural values (despite the efforts of capital to keep these alive for its own benefit) complemented this structural transition. The support base of the strike was thus furnished with a less quiescent (younger) element. In this respect, the experience of the war for some workers probably helped to bring accepted values about chiefly leadership under question. Significantly, amongst the 40 men prosecuted following the strike, several were returned servicemen. 28

The strike thus revealed an unpalatable truth: the intervention of two prominent chiefs, Ratu George Toganivalu, the Roko Tui Ba, and Ratu Sukuna, now Secretary for Fijian Affairs, had helped to bring an end to the confrontation but not without some diminution of their authority. The authority of resident chiefs and elders had been challenged even more fiercely. They found themselves unable to control what management described as the 'hooligan element' within the younger generation of Fijian workers. 29 Traditional ceremonies
of reconciliation were performed by 46 provincial representatives to the general manager but as the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police wryly noted:

The unfortunate part of this reconciliation is that it was not attended by those who actually took a prominent part in the strike such as the young hooligan element who are so undisciplined. 30

Reay added a note of cynicism, describing the presentation of a tabua to Nilsen as 'a token of reconciliation (not of atonement)'. Ratu Sukuna, visiting the mines the following month, found the men 'unrepentant'. 31

The strike produced new leaders, amongst them Nemani, an applauded orator who became the first secretary of the mineworkers' union, and others including Ratu Semi Kolikata and Jone Fotu who were amongst twelve of the strike leaders given positions on the new Fijian Committee. Of the committee's 19 members, the majority had records of long and 'unbroken' service, a number having been employed since the 1930's. 32 The deficiencies of the 'old' committee were widely held to have been partly responsible for the strike. Originally intended as a forum for workers' elected representatives and management, its meetings had become irregular and were no longer attended by the general manager. This removed direct access to management, brought considerable delays in communication, and meant that meetings were chaired by a community officer who spoke no Fijian. Reay, however, believed that in the final analysis the committee's demise was 'irrelevant to the strike'; new leaders had emerged and the 'old' committee '...though an elected one, was not truly representative...'. 33
Whatever the truth of the matter, the election of new representatives was ultimately to become a thorn in the side of organised labour. In principle, the committee could not satisfy the aspirations of mineworkers; it was only a forum for 'requests' and had the contradictory task of being responsible to management as well as to the workforce. As one ex-worker commented, 'If rejected, what could people do? Only when the union came in, they could do something.' With the union's formation, the Fijian Committee was to be used by management as a divisive ploy.

In the disquiet following the end of the strike, the urgent need for greater management interest in the welfare of its workforce was acknowledged in government recommendations for better housing conditions and more organised 'collective games and native mekes'. Beyond this, the overriding concern of the administration was to find the best way of reasserting social control at the mines. The 'criminal violence' with which Fijians had 'successfully defied Government' and forced the police to retreat, and the 'entire absence of respect or regard for their own chiefs' raised daunting questions about state security. Fears of 'communistic' influence on the field, though this remained unproven, were expressed both within the administration and by the mining companies. The organisation of the strike, in particular the incident that provided the occasion for the strike, was denoted 'typical Communist procedure'.

As Nilsen was quick to point out, the challenge to traditional values and the weakness of customary sanctions were not restricted to the mining town:
...the present young generation of Fijians are drifting away from the control of their native customs and chiefs and Government will be well advised to have a strong force in future to meet the emergency. It would be a very serious problem if the Indians and Fijians had strikes at the same time. 39

His proposed strategy of defence was supported by some government officers. In the opinion of the District Commissioner Western, the strike had indicated 'the urgent need for more Police in the Western District with adequate training to deal with mobs, either with batons or with firearms if the need should arise.' 40 The Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police took an equally strong stand:

I am inclined to think that the real trouble is deep-rooted and has not yet been probed; and my opinion is that in the very near future much more strike is to be expected at Vatukoula before matters become serene again and that the only way that this will be attained will be through a show of force. 41

The gravity of the situation gave Nilsen an additional weapon when he pressed for the Governor's assurance of full state protection in the event of recurring disputes. 42 His message was an unambiguous one: industrial stability - which only the state could guarantee - was a precondition of continued operations. Fears of interference with the production of gold ensured the government's acquiescence. It accepted Nilsen's arguments that 'intimidation' and 'violent mob demonstration' by Fijian workers had alienated and frightened the European and half-caste communities and that any chance of further incidents would lead to their immediate 'exodus' from the mines; that if essential services were disrupted, there was a real danger of underground flooding, an event that would mean certain closure of the mines for at least three or four years. The government's belief that the companies had been treated to an indefensible display of 'hooliganism' merely made the grounds for supporting their case more compelling. 43
The action taken by the state to restore control was both defensive and punitive. Since the most urgent task was to '...bolster up the authority of the Fijian chiefs as much as possible...', further visits by the Secretary for Fijian Affairs and the Roko Tui Tailevu and Ba were made early in January. The secondment as Fijian liaison officer of the Buli Bau and Governor's matanivanua, Ratu Rusiate Komaitai, was a further step taken to bring Fijian mineworkers 'under the control of the Fijian administration'; while the reconstitution of the Fijian Committee which government recommended restored a vital link between management and labour.

Sukuna 'strongly' advised the companies to have special men (two or three) appointed to see that undesirables who have been dismissed leave the goldfields, that is the property of the Company, within a reasonable time. If they do not, I presume an action for trespass lies.

He added two words of caution: that because of the 'considerable influence' of Ratu Semi, 'any action taken against him at this unsettled juncture is likely to lead to unfortunate & unhappy consequences...'; and that although...

...there can be no objection to his enquiring into proposed dismissals & giving his decisions in these cases which are, after all, subject to confirmation by you...[Rusiate] should not, in the interests of the Company & his standing amongst the men, be also asked to act as the policeman.

The prosecution of the strike's ringleaders and key supporters exemplified the Pyrrhic nature of their victory. A three day trial for 40 men charged with rioting under section 76 of the Penal Code delivered sentences of between one and six months with hard labour for 16; and two years' probationary release for 24 (plus a £10 bond and two sureties of £10 each). A.D. Patel, the Nadi lawyer and
Indian member for the northwestern division, allegedly willing even
to fund-raise so that legal costs could be covered, sought to be
counsel for the defendants. He was 'over-ruled' by Ratu Sukuna,
and Robert Munro, a New Zealand lawyer long resident in the colony,
was selected in his place.

Munro did not share Patel's radical politics nor his close
association with the (Fijian and Indian) working class, but his
selection had an even more important consequence: the Crown's case
was not challenged and the defence case presented in February 1948
merely pleaded mitigation for a group of 'backward natives' who were
probably badly influenced by their leaders. Supporters of the
defendants who declared their intention to stop work in order to
attend court were advised that they would be forcibly resisted. And
a small group of workers who were not on shift and were thus
titled to attend the proceedings, were prevented by resident
chiefs and the new liaison officer.

The Birth of the Fijian Mineworkers' Union

If the formation of a union in March 1948 raised Fijian hopes of a
better deal, these were soon to be dashed. The bid for unionisation
was not resisted by the state; on the contrary it received every
encouragement. The legitimate right of mineworkers to combine had
been enshrined in the Industrial Associations Ordinance. But as
noted earlier, any philanthropic sentiments that may have underlain
support for the legislation - evidence of changing times, a post-war
labour (home) government, and international conventions - were
heavily outweighed by an astringent analysis of the problems brought by the advancing tide of Fijian proletarianisation and shrewd perceptions of the changing requirements of labour control.

The political implications of the December strike and the militancy and heightened consciousness of a new vanguard of mineworkers left Reay in little doubt that though 'responsible trade unionism' might take time to emerge, the attempts to unionise should not be thwarted but actively encouraged. Premised on a realistic appreciation of the industrial climate, his efforts to persuade the mining companies to support the initiative accordingly offered a prognosis that would defend their position against recalcitrant workers. It was, he said,

...better that the union should be formed under our aegis than under the aegis of some person whose motives might not be altogether good. 50

The intention of the Labour Department was thus to 'nurse the new union carefully during its early stages'. 51 Encouragement meant close involvement and supervision. This was done in a variety of ways, all of which combined to place organised resistance within acceptable parameters. Labour Department officials assisted in drawing up a draft constitution and rules, prescribing fees, and laying down the procedure for the election of officers. Concerned to prevent the convicted and discharged caucus of strike leaders from influencing the composition and temper of the infant union, Reay was also able to steer its ad hoc committee away from making the appointments of president and secretary open to outsiders although this was within the law. 52 The advantage of this for company control was not lost on Nilsen and his message to Theodore was a confident one:
I do not think we will have any trouble with these fellows, as all their officials and members of the committee are employees of the Mining Companies. We will endeavour to keep outside influences out. I am quite certain that it will be only a matter of time when these same men are coming to us asking for advice and guidance in their Union affairs. 53

By late February, the Governor (Freeston) too was able to report to the Colonial Office that 'indications at present are that the Union will be controlled by moderate elements.' 54

Government 'advice' and 'assistance' also took the form of regular visits to the mines, attendance at union meetings, and a close working relationship with management and the police. Management was advised of developments in the union, and, charged with the task of gathering intelligence and monitoring the industrial temperature, the police informed the administration of impending claims. 55

Officials addressing union meetings left no doubt that their 'assistance' was circumscribed by the government's commitment to the expansion of the mining industry. Workers were urged to cooperate with rather than confront the companies, to avoid strike action, and to increase their productivity. As the Acting Commissioner of Labour, Hollister-Short, reported to Nilsen of one such meeting, one of its objects had been to 'generally give [the workers] a pep talk on their responsibilities to the Home and Fijian Governments, and to their employers.' 56 The services of 'Reay's offsider from England' vindicated Nilsen's chosen strategy of 'playing ball' with him; and Nilsen's hope that it would 'not be long before he is working for the Mining Companies too. (We have handled these Union blokes before)' was certainly not in vain. 57

The full impact of this manipulative strategy was demonstrated in August 1948 when the union committee was pressed to withdraw wages
and the cost of living bonus from the agenda that it had prepared for discussion with the companies. Management's refusal to meet the committee, its persistent rejection of a wage rise for Fijian labour without increased productivity, and its threat to close the mine if the issue was not dropped, had already pushed the union into a defensive position. Hollister-Short now acted on this ultimatum by seeking to persuade the union to see the error of its ways. The union's loss of credibility and the rift between the rank and file and leadership in later years had their roots in the success of these early manoeuvres.

Union efforts to establish a viable basis for collective bargaining were further hampered by the pre-emptive re-establishment of the Fijian Committee in the wake of the December strike. The companies were now much keener to support this forum. Its meetings were held more frequently and afforded greater management participation. And although management 'tentatively' agreed that the committee system would be redundant once the union was properly established, there was nothing to suggest that it ever really envisaged abandoning what it regarded as an effective instrument of labour control and social influence.

In an industry where the structure of Fijian earnings incorporated an important non-cash component in the form of housing and food, the responsibilities of the employer logically included the living as well as the working conditions of its work force. That the platform of the union should similarly trespass into matters relating to the welfare of its members outside the workplace was the corollary of this. Consequently, the shortcomings of housing and sanitation, the paucity of rations, and the need for more social venues and
recreational facilities - matters raised habitually at meetings of the Fijian Committee - also became the declared prerogative of the union. In turn, the committee continued to raise occupational matters.

The expanse of common ground did not, however, strengthen the position of organised mine labour. On the contrary, it encouraged fragmentation and friction mainly because management's determination '...to minimise the influence of the Union...' meant that it repeatedly communicated and negotiated with the committee rather than with the union, and that it took full advantage of its employment of a respected chief as liaison officer. In September 1949, for example, when the union complained that unauthorised deductions had been made from Fijian wages to support the Sports Association, Cayzer retorted that these had been approved by the Fijian Committee in liaison with Ratu Rusiate - 'representatives of all our Fijian employees' (my emphasis). Later in 1951 when the union objected to the fact that the committee (rather than itself) had been advised of a possible wage increase, a similar defence was offered. Evidently, management had taken Theodore's earlier advice to heart that:

...the best course of policy in respect to the Mine Workers' Union should be one of masterly inactivity. As the Union can fill no function that could not be filled just as well by the old Fiji Committee I should think the average Fijian worker will get tired of paying a shilling per pay into the Union. I think it will tend to fizzle out.

62

The restriction of membership to Fijians in any case imposed constraints on the emergence of a strong union. It gave the union a communal stamp and consciousness and thus limited its appeal. In so doing, it widened the gulf between the different racial groups
comprising the mine workforce. In May 1949, however, just over a year after its foundation, membership was opened '...to all Fijian, Indian, Polynesian, Euronesian workers "regularly" and "normally" employed by the mining industry and deemed eligible by the Executive Committee'. The decision marked an important step towards an organised industrial front. It signified the beginnings of a crucial ideological transition, though Reay preferred to see it as a strategy necessary because of the organisational deficiencies of Fijians as a racial group:

...Fijian leaders have found themselves, by reason of their own limiting racial characteristics, unable to pursue a sufficiently vigorous policy. The result is that while there are probably a number of difficulties which a trade union elsewhere would have taken up with Management, the union committee at Vatukoula has not had the courage or initiative to do so. The leaders probably find that their members are becoming apathetic in the face of no results, and it may be that they want to introduce more articulate elements into their organisation. 63

For the Labour Department, at least, the move was not entirely an alarming one. The inclusion of Indians was considered a danger for they tended 'to use a trade union for selfish or political ends rather than for the good of their fellow workers' but the admission of half-castes was regarded as being to the companies' as well as to the union's advantage because of the alleged intellectual superiority of this group. 64 In principle, Reay was encouraged by the change, 'convinced' that the companies had 'less to fear from a live Fijian union than from no union at all, or a union which exists only on paper.' 65

For its part, the mines' management was not about to sit back and await confirmation of Reay's wisdom. The Fijian Committee offered an alternative and more easily controlled 'channel for the
ventilation of differences...'; and its policy of job and wage discrimination could be usefully advanced to deflect the threat of united agitation on class lines. In particular, the accelerated promotion of Rotumans and half-castes to shift boss status helped to maintain racial divisions as well as to minimise union support amongst these two groups: the latter were not permitted to enjoy the dual benefits of promotion and union representation. Bluntly put,

...if a man was thought suitable for the position of Shift Boss he was interviewed. It was pointed out to him at this meeting that if he wanted to take the position he would be promoted but not as a member of the Union. No offence was committed as the choice was made by the man himself. 66

Institutionalised racial divisions in the workplace inhibited non-Fijians from joining the union in another way. Generally employed as skilled workers, half-castes were unlikely to align themselves with an association dominated by unskilled labour and therefore mainly concerned with improving conditions for the worst victims of occupational discrimination. Unskilled half-caste workers, though more likely to subscribe, would of course have still been deterred by a desire to maintain their superior earnings and privileges. Sectional interests were paramount at least in the early years, and the efforts of skilled (half-caste) workers to form a separate trade union in 1950, while abortive, were a measure of this. 67

There were other more practical obstacles to the early development of the union. Under the direction of the Labour Department, there were no paid positions until August 1948, when the first full-time secretary was appointed. 68 Further, until the end of November, the companies steadfastly refused to make office space available to the union committee. They relented following the warning of the Acting
Commissioner of Labour that there was 'the danger if Union Headquarters are set up outside the Field of reactionaries stepping in and upsetting the whole structure', but charged an exorbitant rent of 25/- a week. The lack of trade union education and training, the very limited funds available because of the low wages paid to Fijian workers, and the difficulties of having to conduct negotiations and interpret legislation in a second language, provided a disastrous backing to the various strategies devised to keep the union weak and fragmented. The union's failure to comply with the legal requirements of accounting procedure prompted a government enquiry in 1948 and led to the dismissal and prosecution of its secretary for embezzlement.

If high union fees deterred workers from becoming active members, their reduction 'to a sensible level' in November 1948 did not arrest the declining support. Between July 1948 and January 1950, numbers fell from 893 to 547. The apparent dormancy of the union — both a cause and a consequence of dwindling support — was reflected in a spell of uninterrupted industrial peace until early 1949. When this was broken, it was no measure of growing union strength but rather the disenchantment of rank and file members. The end of the decade gave a hint of what was to dominate the industrial conflict of the 1950's in a small spate of unofficial strikes. And the feature of the aftermath of the 1947 strike was that labour, even though organised into a union, still represented no real threat to mining capital.
Section I


3. Vat/EGM service record cards of Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula.

4. D.C.J. Hill to Dunstan, 17.6.35, MSE/Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL; see also DC Colo North (C.S. Reay) to CS, 3.8.35, CSO F36/16; ibid PC to CS minute, 2.12.36.

5. Interviews with Fijian mineworkers Vatukoula, Feb 1982; Theodore note, 13.9.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935–.

6. A notice to all Fijians in Oct 1936 advised '...all Fijian employees who have complaints or grievances...[to] discuss them with their "Fijian Native Committee".' The committee would 'listen to their case and endeavour to straighten out their trouble'. The matter would be raised with management if considered 'of sufficient importance'. The committee was obliged in addition 'to interest themselves in the welfare of the Fijian community and to promote harmony and good fellowship amongst all Fijians on the field'. Managing Director Theodore Notice to Native Labour, Oct 1936, Vat/.

7. See C.A. Reay believed that the Kisan Sangh (the sugar growers' union) might not have been formed had the CSR established a similar institution. He advised the company to introduce one for mill labour.

8. On the copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, a council of tribal elders was introduced in 1931. A.L. Epstein gives a detailed account of a system similarly 'designed to provide a link between the Compound Manager and the African population of the compound', noting its usefulness as a means of communicating policy decisions and of keeping management informed of worker grievances. Despite its lack of legal powers, the council also proved extremely important as 'an agency of social control' because of its adjudicating role in settling petty, mainly domestic, disputes. See Epstein, A.L. Politics in an Urban African Community, University of Manchester: The University Press, 1958, pp 27–38.
9. Nilsen remarked in 1948: 'It has always been the practice of the Fijians at Vatukoula to consider the General Manager as their Turaga-ni-koro...'. Nilsen to Theodore, 8.3.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

10. The work of Ian Phimister and Charles van Onselen on 'The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity' underlines the importance of integrating communal conflict and violence into studies of working class struggle. It offers an incisive critique of the view that 'faction fights' were 'manifestations of mindless, irrational "tribal" violence', or as the Rhodesia Chamber of Mines proposed 'riots which break out for no apparent reason amongst savage people'. Phimister and van Onselen op. cit. pp 40-41 and S480/93, 'Memorandum on the position of Compound Managers on Mines in Southern Rhodesia', 11.7.70, cited in Phimister and van Onselen op. cit. p 43.


15. Vat/EGM service record cards of Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula; Nilsen to Secretary Native Fijian Committee, 19.10.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-; Community Officer (Garnett) to General Manager, 24.9.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944; ibid General Manager to Community Officer memo, 28.9.42.

16. Vat/EGM service record cards of Fijian employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula. The refusal of Fijians to return immediately to the site of an accident was a recurring problem for the companies. For examples see IOM's account of 1938 strike, IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38, CSO F36/39/1 and Nilsen General Manager to Chairman of Directors, 30.1.42, Vat/Loloma Period Reports Jan 1941-June 1944; ibid Nilsen General Manager to Chairman of Directors, 18.6.42.

17. In Feb 1939, for example, a group of 80 indentured men from Lomaiviti refused to work for four days when they found there was no accommodation for them, rations were poor and other items of their contract were unsatisfactory. They finally returned home. Inspector of Police Ba & Tavua to Commissioner of Police Suva memo, 24.3.39, CSO F36/39/1. For another example see SNA N44/15/8.


20. Associated Mining Companies, Native Employees Discharged Jan-19 Nov 1947, SNA N/12/1/1 Pt 1. So too, the various forms of absenteeism discussed above also continued as a form of 'silent' protest at the same time as organised strike action became more prevalent. Vat/Minutes of Fijian Committee Meetings, 20.1.48 and 7.12.48; also see chapter seven.

21. Timekeeper to Ditchburn memo, 26.6.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; ibid Spaeth to Ditchburn, Assistant General Manager Emperor Mines, 14.11.36. See sections IV & V.

22. Phimister and van Onselen op. cit. p 3.
Section II

1. For official and company accounts of the incidents (sometimes conflicting) see CSO F50/53; DC Ba and Tavua monthly diary for Feb 1936, CSO F10/6 Pt 6; PC Lau monthly diaries for Feb & Mar 1936, CSO F15/5 Pt 4; SNA N16/1/69; the Fiji Times and Herald and Pacific Islands Monthly Feb 1936; Minutes of Directors EGM meeting, Feb 1936, Vat/Emperor Mines August 1935-Dec 1939.

2. Fiji Times and Herald 11.2.36. The Sydney Morning Herald reported approximately 200 Ra men to 60 Tailevu men and the Fiji Times 4:1. Sydney Morning Herald 13.2.35 and Fiji Times 11.2.35.

3. Theodore Managing Director EGM Co, 11.2.35, CSO F50/53; Fiji Times 11.2.36 & 13.2.36.

4. Theodore, the DC Ba, Ratu Tawake (Ra) and Ratu Pope Cakobau (Tailevu) agreed to this course of action. J.E. Windrum DC Ba to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 19.5.36, SNA N16/1/69; Roko Tui Tailevu, P.E. Cakobau to PC Tailevu, 12.2.36, CSO F50/53.

5. J.E. Windrum DC Ba to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 19.5.36, SNA N16/1/69.

6. DC Ra to CS telegram, 13.2.36, CSO F50/53; ibid DC Ba to CS telegram, 19.2.36.

7. This was especially interesting because it was lodged just a few days after a work stoppage by European miners over wages. DC Ba & Tavua monthly diary for Nov 1935, CSO F10/6 Pt 5.

8. Theodore Managing Director EGM Co, 11.2.36, CSO F50/53.

9. J.E. Windrum DC Ba to Secretary for Native Affairs minute, 19.5.36, SNA N16/1/69.

10. For example see DC Ra to CS Half-yearly report for Ra 1936, 19.8.36, CSO F22/3 Pt 1.

11. Theodore refused but the men were amongst those who were later convicted of assault and accordingly discharged.

12. Phimister and van Onselen op. cit. p 41.

13. Extract Mining Board, 5.3.36, CSO F50/53; ibid Acting Secretary for Native Affairs (Monckton) to CS, 7.4.36.

14. 10 signatures to Theodore, 4.9.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935 –.

15. The half-caste strike was over their revised wages schedule. It failed following police intervention which forced dismissed workers to leave the field and action taken to ensure they were refused 'assistance' in the capital. DC Ba & Tavua, monthly diary for Sept 1936, CSO F10/6 Pt 6.
16. Managing Director, circa Sept 1936, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--.

17. ibid Chairman Matanagata Committee to Theodore, 17.9.36. Theodore agreed that Sunday work would be avoided if possible and that where it was necessary, volunteers would be sought. ibid Theodore to Ditchburn, 18.9.36.

18. ibid Sevanaia Naulu (Chairman) & Peni W. Viudreketi (Secretary) to Acting General Manager, 19.10.36; Community Officer (Garnett) to General Manager re. Meeting Fijian Committee, 24.9.42, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944 Community Officer; Chairman & Secretary Native Fijian Committee to Acting General Manager EGM, 24.10.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--; ibid Assistant General Manager to Chairman Native Committee Matanagata, 26.10.36; ibid Chairman & Secretary Committee to Acting General Manager, 30.10.36; ibid Managing Director Theodore to Secretary Fijian Committee, 7.9.37; Community Officer (Garnett) to General Manager, 6.6.41, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944 Community Officer; ibid Community Officer to General Manager memo, 30.9.43.

19. Chairman & Secretary Fijian Labour Committee to Acting General Manager, 30.10.36, Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935--.

20. ibid Managing Director Theodore to Secretary Fijian Committee, 7.9.37.
Section III

1. IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38, CSO F36/39/1; ibid Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police (hereafter Acting DCP) to Commissioner of Police (hereafter C/P), 16.11.38.

2. Fijian mineworkers recall that the main grievance was the discrepancy between Fijian and half-caste/Rotuman wages (Interviews Vatukoula, July 1982). There is some discrepancy in accounts of the wage increase demanded by the strikers. The Acting DCP recorded a demand for 5/- for underground workers and 3/6 for surface labour in addition to regular increases. The minutes of the secretariat meeting of 6.11.38 at which Nilsen was present, however, noted that the strikers wanted a general increase of 5/- for all Fijian workers. Although the issue of poor housing was not raised during the strike, the Acting DCP commented on the 'deplorable' living conditions for single men at the Emperor mine where the strike began and won most of its support. Acting DCP memo, 16.11.38, CSO F36/39/1. See chapter five.

3. Acting DCP to C/P memo, 4.11.38, CSO F36/39/1.

4. ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38.

5. ibid Acting DCP memo, 16.11.38.

6. ibid DC Central to CS, 7.11.38.

7. ibid CS to Adviser on Native Affairs, 16.11.38; ibid Hedstrom to CS, 24.11.38.

8. ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38. The service record cards of Fijian mineworkers bear this out.

9. ibid Acting DCP to C/P memo, 16.11.38; ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38.

10. ibid Minutes of Meeting held in Secretariat, Sunday 6 November 1938 with Representatives of the Tavua Gold Mines regarding the Labour Dispute.

11. ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38.

12. ibid Acting DCP memo, 16.11.38.

13. ibid Juxon Barton (CS) note on IOM memo, 9.11.38.

14. ibid Acting DCP memo, 16.11.38.

15. The minimum surface and underground wage in Australia (in 1936) was 16/4 & 17/4 per shift respectively. For 'skilled machine workers' assigned to wet places, higher rates were paid, the bonus varying between 6d and 3/- per shift. ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38.

16. ibid Juxon Barton (CS) note on IOM memo, 9.11.38.
17. ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38; ibid Acting DCP to C/P memo, 16.11.38.

18. Minutes of Meeting held in Secretariat, Sunday 6 November 1938...CSO F36/39/1. The recommendation was approved by Barton, Hedstrom, H.H. Ragg and Nilsen. See chapter five re. the very low level of compensation awarded in both cases. The wages schedule was not translated until the following year and only after pressure from government officers. DC Ba to CS, 11.1.39, CSO F36/39/1; ibid CS to General Manager Emperor, 25.1.39; ibid Nilsen to CS, 31.1.39.

19. ibid General Manager Loloma (Godden) to DC Ba, 27.12.38 and General Manager Emperor (Nilsen) to DC Ba, 30.12.38.

20. DC Central monthly diary for Nov 1938, CSO F10/6 Pt 7.

21. CS (JB) to Governor minute, 1.11.38, CSO F36/39/1.

22. ibid CS (Barton) to Governor, 4.11.38. The use of coded telegrams was itself an indication of the government's security fears.

23. ibid Minutes of Meeting held in Secretariat, Sunday 6 November 1938...CSO F36/39/1. Nilsen was most anxious to acquire the services and 'influence' of Ratu Sukuna but he was not part of the official deputation. Following the strike, Nilsen had discussions with him and invited him to spend some time at the mines as the companies' guest in order to 'sense the feelings of the Fijian community'. Nilsen to Theodore, 16.12.38, Vat/Confidential to 1940.

24. Acting DCP to C/P memo, 4.11.38, CSO F36/39/1; ibid Minutes of Meeting held in Secretariat, Sunday 6 November 1938...

25. DC Central monthly diary for Nov 1938, CSO F10/6 Pt 7.

26. DC Central to CS memo, 7.11.38, CSO F36/39/1.

27. ibid Acting DCP to C/P memo, 16.11.38.

28. ibid DC Central to CS memo, 7.11.38; ibid Acting DCP to C/P memo, 16.11.38; ibid IOM to Chairman Mining Board memo, 9.11.38.

29. ibid Juxon Barton (CS) note on IOM memo, 9.11.38.

30. ibid C/P to CS, 17.11.38.

31. MSE/LGMNL Report of AGM 11.11.38. The DC Ba also stressed that'...the presence of Ratu Tiale helped considerably to bring the strike to an end.' DC Ba to CS, 16.11.38, CSO F36/39/1.

Section IV

1. Nilsen to Acting Secretary FMWU, 8.12.48, Vat/; ibid Nilsen to Local Secretary EGM Co Ltd Melbourne, 29.3.49.

2. Nilsen General Manager to DC Ba, 26.4.43, Vat/Govt Correspondence 1942-Mar 1944.

3. For example, a fight broke out between men from Verata and Rewa in 1941. Community Officer to General Manager, 10.10.41, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944.

4. In 1943, the Fijian Committee complained that American soldiers were harrassing their women. Community Officer to General Manager, 20.1.43, Vat/Dept Memos 1941-May 1944.


6. Apart from the withdrawal of 1,219 Fijians in 1942 noted in chapter three, a group of 37 men walked off the job the following year. Management also reported the 'resumption' of abusive and blasphemous writing (in Fijian) on walls in 1947. See Nilsen General Manager to DC Ba, 26.4.43, Vat/Govt Correspondence 1942-Mar 1944; Mining Dept Bosses Meeting, 12.8.47, Vat/Emperor Mine Bosses Meetings Accident Reports.

7. Nilsen to Theodore, 12.8.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN; Nilsen to Theodore, 20.4.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941-Nov 1944. Agitation by half-castes followed their release from the army for 'essential' mine work and their allocation to European jobs. For a discussion of the influence of European militancy on New Guinea mine labour, see Newbury op. cit. pp 25-38.

8. For official reports on the Mt Kasi strike see CSO F36/39/16; for an account of the 1943 sugar strike see Moynagh, Michael, Brown or White? A history of the Fiji sugar industry, 1873-1973, Pacific Research Monograph No 5, ANU, 1981; for details of the CSR Yaqara strike see General Manager to Manager Rarawai Mill, 9.9.46, CSR 142/1118 Private Out.

9. Chairman Conjoint Branches - Loloma & Matanagata - of the Young Fijian Society (Ni Viti Cauravou), 6.7.43, SNA N44/1/149.

10. President Young Fijian Society to Talai (Sukuna), 26.7.43, SNA N44/149. Uluiviti was appointed treasurer in Feb 1948. See Vat/Minutes AGM Mineworkers Union, 28.2.48.

11. C/L (Reay) to Emperor & Loloma companies, 31.8.43, SNA N44/1/149.
12. These were enacted as Ordinances No 18 & 19 of 1941.


14. See C.A.

15. Attorney in Fiji (Lord) to Sir Murchison Fletcher, 4.5.32, CSR 142/2901.

16. CSR 142/2905.

17. Ernest S. Smith to General Manager Sydney Private, 11.5.40, CSR 142/2905; ibid Ernest S. Smith to Acting General Manager Sydney, Private, 8.8.41.

18. Acting General Manager to Manager Nausori Mill, 23.5.41, CSR 142/1106.

19. See C.A.


22. CO 83/237/5020; see C.A.


25. Reay to CS, 9.4.42, CSO F36/125 Pt 1. Approximately 2,300 Fijians and Indians were involved in the strike. The main demands were for a 5/- daily wage plus rations and the removal of eight CSR overseers. See Nilsen to Theodore, 20.4.42, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN July 1941–Nov 1944.


27. See C.A. Another reason for introducing the Industrial Associations Ordinance according to Reay was that it 'would be difficult to defend to the Indian Members of Leg Co' the enactment of the disputes ordinance without it. Reay to CS, 9.4.42, CSO F36/125 Pt 1.

28. Leg Co Debates Attorney General, 18.12.41. Reay too stressed the 'measure of control' that the ordinance would give the government. See C.A.
29. Reay admitted later that these restrictions were probably responsible for 'retarding' the formation of unions. They prevented casual unskilled labour which moved from one type of employment to another from unionising; and they required artisans to form small craft unions or else to confine themselves to particular trades - in this way preventing the establishment of (potentially) more powerful artisans' unions. See C.A.

30. Section 6, Ordinance No 18, 1941. Membership restrictions were obstructive, the Colonial Secretary acknowledged, for 'members of a trade [did] not normally include persons with the knowledge and ability required to organise a trade union'. See C.A.

31. See C.A.

32. Section 10, Ordinance No 19, 1941.
Section V

1. The description of the strike given in this section and its background are based on police and administrative and company officials' reports contained in a large confidential colonial secretariat file (see C.A.); a range of company files including those entitled Correspondence EGT/NEN Chief and Chief General Manager; Fijian Labour Union, Industrial Association, Labour Unrest 1947; and others that are unclassified; also interviews between European (ex) management and local mineworkers. The Fiji Times and Herald provides only brief coverage of the strike and is of limited use as a source of information because its reports are based on selected information passed on by the companies themselves.

2. See C.A; MSE/Emperor Annual Report 1948.

3. See C.A. Similar views were expressed in Theodore Managing Director to Nilsen General Manager, 23.12.47, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN Chief & Chief General Manager; and see C.A.

4. See C.A.

5. See C.A.

6. See C.A. According to the company's mill superintendent, the majority of Tevita's supporters appeared to be about 18 years old. L.M. Abell Mill Superintendent to General Manager, 13.12.47, Vat/Fijian Labour Union, Industrial Association, Labour Unrest 1947.

7. See C.A.

8. The strikers agreed to drop their demand for the dismissal of the Community Officer.

9. Essential services included the water pumps, power house & winder engines. With most half-castes and Rotumans forced to stop work, the European staff kept these services going. Nilsen to Theodore cable, 11.12.47, Vat/.

10. See C.A.

11. See C.A; Interview Ray Wilkie, Sydney, April 1981.


15. Vat/General Manager's Report on Labour Trouble...15.12.47, Vat/.
16. See C.A; Fiji Times & Herald 9.2.48.

17. See C.A.

18. See C.A; Fiji Times and Herald 9.2.48. Tevita's dismissal resulted directly from information supplied to management by the local police. See L.M. Abell Mill Superintendent to General Manager, 13.12.47, Vat/Fijian Labour Union, Industrial Association, Labour Unrest 1947; and C.A.

19. Reinforcements comprised 38 NCOs and constables, 30 rifles, and 1,000 rounds of ammunition. See C.A.


21. See C.A.

22. Vat/Minutes of Fijian Committee Meeting, 18.12.47.

23. See C.A.


25. See C.A.

26. Other reasons given were: the need to cover expenses for ceremonial presentations, damage to company property and legal advice when court action was brought against strikers. See C.A.


28. Fiji Times and Herald 9.2.48. The paper also reported that long service workers and young men were amongst the strikers.


30. See C.A.

31. See C.A.

32. Membership Fijian Committee 18.12.47, Vat/.

33. See C.A.

34. Interview half-caste mineworker, Suva, Aug 1982.

35. Reay was not satisfied that the trouble was over and Nilsen reported that'...ever since the strike we have been living in an atmosphere of uncertainty amongst these potential troublemakers'. Nilsen to Theodore, 23.12.47, Vat/. See C.A.

36. See C.A.
37. See C.A. The Attorney General complained that section 77 of the Penal Code plus all necessary force (including firearms) could have justifiably used against the rioters.

38. See C.A; Nilsen to Theodore, 23.12.47, Vat/. Nilsen speculated on the possibility of a recently discharged Australian miner having been a 'communist' influence.


40. See C.A.

41. See C.A.

42. Sir Hugh Ragg (European nominated member of Leg Co) and Maurice Scott (European member for Northwest Division) put the company case to the Governor and the secretariat in the aftermath of the strike and Nilsen himself had interviews with the Governor. Nilsen to Theodore cable, 16.12.47, Vat/; Maurice Scott to Governor, 20.1.48, Vat/.

43. See C.A. The companies' decision to abandon the boxing programme following the strike therefore had the Governor's approval as just retribution: it would 'bring home to the Fijians the fact that the Mining Company is not prepared to do everything for them, and receive the treatment which they did during the riots'. H. Maurice Scott to Nilsen, 20.1.48, Vat/.

44. See C.A; Nilsen to Theodore, 2.1.48, Vat/.

45. See C.A.

46. J.L.V. Sukuna to Nilsen, 16.1.48, Vat/.

47. Fiji Times and Herald 5.2.48.

48. See C.A.

49. See C.A.

50. See C.A.

51. See C.A.

52. See C.A; Reay suspected that the reason the question had been raised by the committee was its interest in appointing Ratu Semi as president on his release from gaol.

53. Nilsen to Theodore, 8.3.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

54. See C.A.

55. Acting C/L (Hollister-Short) to Nilsen, 4.1.49, Vat/; Acting C/L to Nilsen General Manager, 18.11.48 and 18.10.48, Vat/; Minutes AGM Mineworkers Union, 28.2.48, Vat/; Reay C/L to Nilsen Confidential, 20.4.49, Vat/; Nilsen to Sir Ratu Sukuna, 28.6.49, Vat/; Also see C.A.

56. Acting C/L (Hollister-Short) to Nilsen, 18.11.48, Vat/.
57. Nilsen to Theodore, 8.3.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

58. Nilsen to Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, 28.6.49, Vat/. See C.A.

59. See C.A; Minutes of union meetings 29.2.48 and 1.3.48, Vat/; Management used the committee to convey disciplinary procedure to the workforce as in the case of absenteeism, and to assume a disciplinary role with regard to gambling and drinking.

60. C/L Annual Report for 1952, CP No 29, 1953; See C.A.

61. C.W. Cayzer to Secretary FMWU, 24.9.49, Vat/; Basilio Mata Secretary FMWU to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 19.9.49, Vat/; Secretary FMWU to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 21.10.51, Vat/; Cayzer General Manager to Secretary FMWU, 23.10.51, Vat/.

62. Theodore (Sydney) to Nilsen, 16.3.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

63. Reay C/L to Nilsen Confidential, 20.4.49, Vat/.

64. ibid

65. ibid Behind Reay's conviction lay concern over the recent collapse of the Public Works Department Union. This was regarded as 'potentially dangerous', for, '...without some channel for the ventilation of differences or potential differences we are going to face trouble when a diminishing cost of living leads to a reduction in cost of living allowances, or when some other difficulty gives rise to discontent.'

66. Meeting JCC meeting, 6.3.67, Vat/Goldmining Joint Consultative Council. That many half-castes and Rotumans did not join the union during the early 1950's was largely due to their supervisory status. Interview mineworker, Suva, August 1982.

67. Labour Officer M. Hollister-Short to C/L, Report on Tour of Viti Levu 22-31 May 1950, 6.6.50, CSO F36/177.

68. See C.A.

69. See C.A; Nilsen to Basilio Mata, 6.6.49, Vat/.

70. Acting C/L (Hollister-Short) to Nilsen, 18.11.48, Vat/.

71. ibid; see C.A. The union executive claimed the embezzlement charge of its secretary and counter propaganda amongst the workers 'by persons unknown' were responsible for dwindling membership figures.
I Shifting Strategies - Causes and Effects

The 1950's marked a turning point in the fortunes of mining capital. The Emperor interests faced a number of obstacles to their continued profitability: cost inflation in respect of labour, staff, materials and equipment as well as mining problems and a static gold price. After Loloma and Dolphin ceased production, Emperor had also to meet the entire costs of milling, social infrastructure and other overheads previously shared with its partners. The mill required modernisation in order to treat more efficiently a rising proportion of ore now mined from the narrow and flat dipping orebodies known as flatmakes, and the transition from predominantly open-cut mining to underground stoping was completed.¹

The early 1950's also held little prospect of alleviating the labour problems confronting the industry. In Australia, a mining boom (in base metal and uranium) depleted the ranks of its European management and skilled workers and raised the price of supporting an expatriate élite. The dependence of Fijians on mine work lessened as copra, sugar, and banana prices became more competitive and cooperative farming more widespread. More men were siphoned off as the government set about recruiting an expeditionary force to wage anti-communist war in Malaya.² The rising cost of Fijian labour aggravated a situation of shortage. The years between 1950 and 1955 witnessed a rate of wage increase that surpassed that of the
previous fifteen years, a development largely attributable to the growing militancy of an organised workforce. (see tables 7.1 and 7.2)

Yet, these developments told but part of a story of a monopoly which within twenty years was transformed from three thriving mines to a single undercapitalised venture, unable to finance a rate of development that would maintain adequate reserves. The other part of the story was told in the group's own rationalisation. In short, the scarcity of working capital derived less from unprofitable mining than from the massive profit distribution encouraged during the peak years of joint production; the 90% reduction of Emperor's capital; and Loloma's reserves and (Australian) investment policy. State subsidisation of development work at Vatukoula indeed began within a year of Emperor's final instalment of capital returns. And behind Loloma's operating losses of the mid-1950's was not a tale of dwindling fortunes but its preference for withdrawal from Fiji mining in favour of more promising ventures - in uranium and tin mining for example - in Australia.

In 1953, it was decided that mining at Loloma and Dolphin and the treatment of their ore would be tailored to a policy aimed at 'taking full advantage of the taxation and royalty laws.' Between 1948 and 1957, the number of Australian companies in which Loloma held shares leapt from 17 to 80, while the total cost value of its investments outside the Fiji mining industry rose from £A664,408 to £A1,325,103. From 1958, the participation of Loloma and Dolphin in mining in the colony was limited to a third interest each held in the exploration and development programme conducted by Emperor.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mining</th>
<th>Milling</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Total Costs per ton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>19/7.3</td>
<td>22/4.3</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>52/9.6</td>
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<td>1950-51</td>
<td>21/4</td>
<td>23/7.7</td>
<td>11/5.6</td>
<td>56/5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>24/2.8</td>
<td>24/8.5</td>
<td>13/9.9</td>
<td>62/9.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>31/6.2</td>
<td>27/1.7</td>
<td>12/6</td>
<td>71/1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>32/4.3</td>
<td>25/4.5</td>
<td>10/5.1</td>
<td>68/1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>38/0.5</td>
<td>25/4.4</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>74/11.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>45/0</td>
<td>28/10.7</td>
<td>14/1.4</td>
<td>88/0.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>47/6.4</td>
<td>31/10.6</td>
<td>14/7.9</td>
<td>94/0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>45/8</td>
<td>29/9</td>
<td>14/7</td>
<td>90/0</td>
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<td>1958-59</td>
<td>51/4</td>
<td>33/7</td>
<td>18/2</td>
<td>103/1</td>
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<td>1959-60</td>
<td>53/10</td>
<td>34/11</td>
<td>19/4</td>
<td>108/1</td>
</tr>
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<td>1960-61</td>
<td>49/2.5</td>
<td>32/6.5</td>
<td>19/7</td>
<td>101/4</td>
</tr>
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<td>1961-62</td>
<td>46/1.5</td>
<td>23/7.25</td>
<td>14/6</td>
<td>84/2.75</td>
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<td>1962-63</td>
<td>44/5.25</td>
<td>19/5.25</td>
<td>12/3.75</td>
<td>76/2.25</td>
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<td>1963-64</td>
<td>44/11.75</td>
<td>19/8.75</td>
<td>12/5.75</td>
<td>77/2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>44/0.5</td>
<td>21/3.25</td>
<td>14/6.25</td>
<td>79/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Years run from July to June each year.

# From 1960-61, total costs per ton milled are given following the introduction of ore sorting.

**TABLE 7.2**

**WAGES & SALARIES AS A PROPORTION OF REVENUE**

**1948 – 1964**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value of Gold and Silver Production for Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin Mines £(F)</th>
<th>Total Salaries &amp; Wages Paid by Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin Companies £(F)</th>
<th>Real Unit Labour Costs as % of the value of production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>904,931</td>
<td>255,221</td>
<td>28.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1,141,593</td>
<td>255,595</td>
<td>22.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,441,982</td>
<td>277,136</td>
<td>19.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,331,987</td>
<td>338,790</td>
<td>25.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1,200,766</td>
<td>390,741</td>
<td>32.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,101,089</td>
<td>376,394</td>
<td>34.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>990,539</td>
<td>399,532</td>
<td>40.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1,037,227</td>
<td>437,752</td>
<td>42.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>943,316</td>
<td>490,627</td>
<td>42.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1,105,254</td>
<td>531,923</td>
<td>48.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1,143,924</td>
<td>532,270</td>
<td>46.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>1,006,059</td>
<td>575,834</td>
<td>57.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,004,188</td>
<td>545,640</td>
<td>54.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,158,312</td>
<td>588,463</td>
<td>50.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>1,209,898</td>
<td>625,049</td>
<td>51.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1,493,247</td>
<td>708,004</td>
<td>47.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1,404,900</td>
<td>729,032</td>
<td>51.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Data compiled and calculated from Vat/Statistics relating to Activities of the Associated Companies – Vatukoula from January 1935 – December 1964.
Two years later, some 20 years after the economies of joint ownership were first recognised, Loloma's directorate finally negotiated a complete merger with Emperor. The low price now paid for gold was one consideration which had not previously applied. In return for 234,000 (5/-) shares in Emperor Mines Ltd, the company sold all its mining interests in Fiji to the operating Emperor company. Dolphin similarly sold out to Emperor for a purchase consideration of 78,000 (5/-) shares in Emperor Mines Ltd.

The less congenial circumstances of the fifties prompted a number of important shifts in Emperor's production and financial policies. As the only mine to remain producing, the thrust of these was of necessity directed at improving rates of production. In addition, the large scale repatriation of surpluses that typified earlier years was curtailed in order to finance the search for new ore bodies and the replenishment of existing reserves. An unprecedented proportion of capital was reinvested in development and exploration. Between 1955 and 1964, the company declared no dividend. Its expenditure on development, on the other hand, rose by nearly 90% from £151,344 to £286,709.

Central to the profitability of earlier years, the industry's cheap labour system now became crucial to its survival. The group tackled the problem of Fijian labour shortages first by experimenting with more rigorous recruitment. It lodged requests with Ratu Sukuna and other members of the central and district administration as in the past or dealt directly with provincial chiefs. Despite its success, the recruitment drive was not pursued much beyond the mid-1950's. There were several reasons for this. The colony's labour
market soon expanded, producing 'voluntary' replenishments and by the end of the decade a surplus reminiscent of the pre-war years.

As a catalyst of urbanisation, taxation continued to reflect one of the contradictions of official native policy: its long recognised social consequences did not prevent the imposition of higher levies including the introduction of a copra tax in 1951. Between 1946 and 1956, the major labour supplying provinces for the mines—Naitasiri, Ra and Tailevu—had their provincial rates increased between 125% and 150%. Over the same period, the cost of living soared; while banana producers still faced marketing and other problems. All these factors encouraged Fijians to move on to the labour market.

The colony's wage labour force rose by 59% between 1946 and 1956. This excluded domestics, stevedores, and salaried and non-manual workers. The 1956 census concluded that a mere 1.2% of the 'eligible male population' (including only 240 Fijians) were unemployed, a conservative estimate to say the least given that Fijians living in their villages were not classified as 'unemployed' regardless of whether or not they were economically active. Overall, the scale of urbanisation in the colony was unmatched by the pace of industrial development; and the unemployment resulting led to a marked deterioration in living standards. In 1958, members of the Legislative Council were advised of a growing amount of unemployment here in Suva as well as in other places in the Colony, and associated with this there is the question of starvation. The number of people begging for food is increasing day by day, and although private people and societies are doing their best to help these people by buying food and supplying it to them, the situation is becoming more acute...
In the mining industry, a reduced demand for labour followed the closure of the Loloma and Dolphin mines. The availability of a new generation of labour at Vatukoula and the progressive elimination of group recruitment diminished the employment opportunities for Fijians still further. Although the companies continued for some years to employ small groups of Fijian labour, provincial requests for short term 'mass engagements' were, on the whole, rejected as untenable. Training was costly; transport costs were avoided by employing men individually; and the system was cumbersome to administer. Until the late 1950's, contracts remained acceptable only if labour was engaged for a minimum of twelve months and it was not all withdrawn at once. By 1960, capital's market advantage enabled it to turn down requests unconditionally.

Recruitment was in any event no solution to the problems of (Fijian) labour costs and agitation; and a more comprehensive and long term solution was found in rationalising the mines' employment structure. Adjustments to the racial distribution of the workforce and further modification of the hierarchy of jobs were undertaken between the mid-1950's and early 1960's. A marked rise in the strength of Indian and Rotuman labour coincided with a drop in the number of Fijians, Europeans and half-castes employed; there was an upgrading of more Rotumans and half-castes to European work categories following management's decision 'to get rid of...European labour of indifferent quality...with a minimum of delay'; more Fijians were allocated to half-caste and Rotuman jobs; and there was some displacement of Fijians by Indians as unskilled labour. All of these changes brought reductions in total labour costs.
The attractions of Indian labour were diverse: it was abundant, comparatively stable and cheap. The insecurity of rural Indians during the post-war years - the scarcity of agricultural land available to them and thus their increasing unemployment, poverty and indebtedness - was congenial to their absorption into the mining industry. By the early 1950's, dependence took deeper root as they endured delays in the demarcation of reserve land and greater difficulty in acquiring land leases or renewals. In 1954, it was estimated that before the end of the decade there would be an additional 2,000 Indians on the labour market every year. Daunted by the prospect of this, the colonial administration expressed interest in the possibility of exporting surplus labour to the nickel mines and coffee plantations of New Caledonia.

In the mining industry, unskilled Indian labour tended to be cheaper than Fijian during the 1950's if the value of rations and housing was added to Fijian cash earnings. Indians did not, until 1959, benefit from the wage increases and other improvements in conditions of work won by the union although membership was officially open to them from 1949. Further, they were not housed on company property and were themselves responsible for paying the cost of commuting between the mines and home (usually in the surrounding cane district and the township of Tavua). Although the numerical strength of Indian labour was never considerable, it rose appreciably from the late 1940's: between 1949 and 1952, it doubled as well as increasing proportionately from 6% to 10%. This pattern continued into the 1960's, bringing numbers to around 300 or 18% of the workforce by January 1969.
With the approval of Governor Sir Brian Freeston, the revival of Rotuman recruitment also took effect around 1950. Fijian resistance to the group's earlier experiments was far from forgotten and plans were accordingly followed with caution. Working informally through 'Rotuman boys who go back to their home on leave', management took great care to introduce men 'by gradual stages so as not to annoy the Fijians'. By 1956, numbers averaged no more than 100. It was between the mid-1950's and early 1960's that the main swell occurred with numbers rising by 138% to 238 and proportionately by 9%. Success in tapping the Rotuman labour market was constrained by its size, the communal demands on the island's young and able-bodied, and the small capacity and infrequent services of passenger vessels operating between Rotuma and Fiji. There were, in addition, legislative restrictions on Rotuman emigration though these had limited practical effect. Indeed, the persistent attempts of the Rotuma Council of Chiefs to bring emigration from the island under stricter regulation were persistently foiled during the late 1940's and early 1950's.

The introduction of a quota which the council proposed in March 1948 delegated the power of approval to the district chiefs. This was dismissed as unacceptable by the colonial secretariat which resolved that the existing powers of the district officer should remain intact. So long as emigration was not excessive, it was decided that 'Rotumans should, as far as possible, be at liberty to move freely within the Colony.' Three years later, the council again urged the adoption of a quota system. In addition, it proposed that a maximum period of six months be applied to authorised absences from home and that chiefs have the power of recall. As before, its
efforts were thwarted and it was advised that such measures might 'hamper(ing) the legitimate movement of surplus population from a small island to its natural outlet - Fiji.'

While economic and demographic factors contributed to Rotuman migration, labour considerations were certainly a determinant of 'liberal' government policy. An application from W.R. Carpenter to recruit Rotumans for its vessels early in 1948 and Nilsen's proposal the following year to recruit mine labour from the island, both found favour with the administration. In general, official policy ensured that an attractive source of labour was not disrupted. And, in December 1950, the annual Rotuman tax levy was doubled.

While the occupational mobility of non-European workers facilitated the more rational use of labour and so helped to reduce labour costs, its impact on the racial division of jobs and earnings was not in fact very great. Certainly between 1950 and 1970, Fijians earned better wages, received more of the benefits enjoyed by other races, and moved into higher paying jobs. But against this, it must be said that pay differentials based on race were long retained; racial equalisation eventuated only after protracted class struggle; and the vast majority of the Fijian workforce did not enjoy the privilege of enhanced job mobility. Capital did not intend to jettison job stratification or to abolish the European monopoly of key supervisory positions. For Fijians, there remained a virtual ban on jobs more senior than junior boss; and where management approved the promotion of non-Europeans, it continued to circumscribe financial gains by a discriminatory system of wages.
The failure to dismantle the barriers to Fijian and half-caste mobility continued to be legitimised by the ruling (racist) ideology. Promotion to positions of responsibility, management announced to shareholders in 1952, was successful but only 'within their natural limits'. With the expansion of underground mining, it was considered vital that Europeans continue to be charged with the task of overseeing local labour. It was 'obvious' that local leading hands and junior bosses were capable of assuming only a limited degree of responsibility and that they could not be left to act independently for long periods without that personal European supervision.

Along with the continuing manipulation of job classifications, mobility restrictions were especially significant in view of advancing stabilisation and mechanisation. As table 7.3 shows, the 1956 census of the colony classified 50% of Fijian mineworkers as 'unskilled', 34% as 'semiskilled', and a mere 10% as 'skilled'. In one particular case in 1961, it transpired that two Fijians had remained leading hand miners for between 12 and 13 years. Another Fijian had been appointed junior boss after seven years of underground work, a classification which scarcely matched his acclaim (by management) as an 'experienced miner' and 'an intelligent resourceful and careful man.'

Institutionalised discrimination remained a focus for union attack and the latter's views were given a public airing in 1960 when a London firm of consultants completed a government-commissioned investigation of Emperor's operations. The Taylor report noted that of 23 shift bosses in the mining department, 16 were half-castes, four Rotuman, and only three Fijian. It confirmed that Fijian representation in supervisory jobs was generally confined to the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>Proprietary, Managerial and Executive</th>
<th>Supervisory and Clerical</th>
<th>Skilled Workers</th>
<th>Semi-skilled Workers</th>
<th>Other Workers (unskilled)</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-European</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotuman</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese &amp; Part-Chinese</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Pacific Islanders &amp; all others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Component Races</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>1,433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled and calculated from Table 13, Report of the Census of the Population, 1956, CP No 1, 1958.
rank of junior boss. In response, the company made some adjustments; but apart from promoting five more men to the position of shift boss, its policy in respect of Fijians was not modified. (see table 7.4)

The decision to retain a 'strong nucleus of qualified, experienced and energetic members [of staff]' was a costly sacrifice in circumstances demanding economies. Regular improvements to European pay and conditions of employment were necessary to compete with the Australian market; and, although the first fifteen years of mining had seen European wages increase at a much faster rate than Fijian wages, their steepest rise came after 1950. Between 1948 and 1954, the average weekly rate (excluding cost of living bonuses) for European fitters, drillers, mechanics and other operators more than doubled: from a range of £6/10/- - £7/10/- it soared to a range of £14 - £17.

The rise in the cost of European shift bosses followed a similar pattern, and by 1967, all skilled Europeans commanded wages in the region of £30 a week. European holiday benefits also improved and leave grants were introduced which alone cost the company in the region of £10,000 a year by 1961. An annual education grant was paid for each child over the age of 14 and the company footed the bill for airfares taking European children to and from Australian schools. By 1963, the weekly cost of subsidising European messing was nearly £5 per capita.

Such inflationary pressures were a significant factor in the companies' wages and salaries bill. Emperor complained in 1957 that a two year arbitration award to local mineworkers was likely to add
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mine Supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ass. Mine Superintendent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Engineers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Mine Foreman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine Foreman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift Foremen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill Foremen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Foremen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift Bosses</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Bosses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

about £14,000 to its annual wages bill. But as table 7.2 shows, the rise in the total cost of salaries and wages between 1956 and 1958 rose by over £41,000. Another two year award to the mineworkers' union in March 1959 was estimated by the company to increase its annual wages bill by £13,000. Again, it can be seen from table 7.2 that total wages and salaries rose by considerably more - by over £56,000 between 1958 and 1961.

In order to offset the high cost of European labour and staff, to lower production costs and to combat other rising prices, the exploitation of local labour was heightened. 'Greater and cheaper output per man,' Nilsen announced in 1953, 'was vitally necessary and had to be achieved in all sections of the mines'. It was not only by adjustments to the occupational structure that a higher rate of surplus value was extracted. Coinciding with the campaign to improve productivity, retrenchments of 'native labour' took place on selected occasions during the 1950's and 1960's. Dismissals and wage deductions were inflicted in order to reduce absenteeism; overtime was 'policed'; and more coercive forms of discipline bolstered efforts to make men work harder and faster.

The success of these measures was soon evident in a rising output per man shift and improved underground efficiency. During the 1960's, the rewards both in terms of output and costs were even more spectacular. It was, Nilsen advised the Acting Financial Secretary in 1961, 'definitely [company policy] to keep the mine on full scale production as long as it is possible, and by whatever means are available to it'. Between 1960 and 1968, production levels accordingly rose by 83% from 179,634 tons to 328,791 tons p.a. and
costs fell by more than 30%. Over the same period, the company's labour strength increased by only 12%. (see tables 7.1 and 7.5)

Especially significant was the fact that from 1962 output levels surpassed those aggregated by the three mines during their peak years as producers before the (Pacific) war; and that despite the disruption caused by a labour dispute in 1964, an all time record was achieved in that year as in most others during the decade. A team of miners—dubbed Macfarlane's Flyers—set an Australasian record in 1966 when it completed 1,309 feet of driving and 70 feet of stripping in its 'spare' time. Rising at the rate of 724 feet in 14 days—part of 'special development'—established a world record the following year.44

Wage control was no longer as easy as in erstwhile years of unorganised labour but the gains of Fijian workers were notable more for their unprecedented regularity than for their volume. Between 1952 and 1966, increments in the basic wage totalled only 4/-45 a shift while the value of rations rose by 1/-. Wages tended to keep abreast of inflation particularly during the 1950's when indexation was an accepted principle of industrial bargaining. But it was still the case that mineworkers were barely earning what their European counterparts had received over thirty years before.

Where capital was forced by arbitration rulings to concede increases, it was often able to demand relief in another quarter, notably through the receipt of financial concessions from the government.46 It also ensured that increments were 'earned' so that
## TABLE 7.5

### GROSS OUTPUT AND LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY

**ASSOCIATED MINES VATUKOULA, 1948-1970**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average Number employed on Emperor, Loloma &amp; Dolphin Mines #</th>
<th>Per Capita Output (tons p.a.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employed on Emp. Lol. Dol. Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>138,376 21,290 10,760 170,426</td>
<td>1,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>135,986 18,287 11,719 165,992</td>
<td>1,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>138,786 20,480 13,946 173,212</td>
<td>1,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>155,473 18,517 10,257 184,247</td>
<td>1,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>149,801 22,898 9,258 181,957</td>
<td>1,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>163,641 18,479 3,997 186,117</td>
<td>1,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>159,860 16,944 2,983 179,787</td>
<td>1,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>156,656 17,308 3,089 179,053</td>
<td>1,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>146,038 19,949 Nil 165,987</td>
<td>1,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>176,305 11,202 Nil 187,507</td>
<td>1,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>191,739 Nil Nil 191,739</td>
<td>1,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>172,393 Nil Nil 172,393</td>
<td>1,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>179,634 Nil Nil 179,634</td>
<td>1,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>200,293 Nil Nil 200,293</td>
<td>1,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>247,185 Nil Nil 247,185</td>
<td>1,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>290,077 Nil Nil 290,077</td>
<td>1,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>269,961 Nil Nil 269,961</td>
<td>1,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>291,588 Nil Nil 291,588</td>
<td>1,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>291,126 Nil Nil 291,126</td>
<td>1,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>313,723 Nil Nil 313,723</td>
<td>1,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>328,791 Nil Nil 328,791</td>
<td>1,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Not Avail. Nil Nil Not Avail.</td>
<td>1,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>327,374 Nil Nil 327,374</td>
<td>Not Avail.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Years run from January to December except for 1965-1970 when they end in June each year.*

# Averages for the years 1965-1969 are calculated from totals in January, June and December each year.

**Source:** Data compiled and calculated from Vat/Statistics relating to Activities of the Associated Companies - Vatukoula from January 1935-December 1964; Emperor Annual Reports 1965 - 1970; Vat/Monthly Returns of Employees Vatukoula Associated Companies 1965-1969.
the cost incurred would 'not be drawn from the profits of the Companies'. Following an award to Fijian workers in 1955, Nilsen cautioned:

we must accept the ruling of the court and not retaliate on the Fijians who are now seeking some Industrial status. However the Fijian must be made aware that he cannot expect to enjoy European standards of living as an addition to the standards of living associated with his koro. 47

The practical effects of these pronouncements were that the periodical review of wage rates was cut back; no further labour was engaged; and no promotions for long service or wage increases were authorised without evidence of improved output. 48

The change in the ration system in the 1960's (to wage deductions for food issued), the access to credit, and the high cost of locally retailed goods, diminished Fijian cash earnings. Other items including house rentals, electricity and superannuation were also now debited from wages. The consequences for many workers were grim since payroll deductions often aggregated more than 50% of gross earnings. In 1969, it transpired that some workers received nothing at all on payday. 49

Complaints prompted investigation by a number of Indian (Opposition) members and - following publicity of this - an enquiry by the labour department. 50 Although the department criticised practices which contravened sections of the Employment and Truck Acts, it instituted no prosecution proceedings, however. 51 It demanded only that the company obtain written authorisation from workers before deductions were made for articles purchased on credit, and that prices in the company store be no higher than those charged elsewhere to the general public. 52
Like direct labour costs, indirect costs were also subject to stringent control. A 'drastic restriction of the services and facilities provided by the Community, Engineering and Construction Dept' was ordered in 1953; and minimal expenditure in all 'non-productive' sectors remained central to efforts to restore the industry to greater profitability. Fijians bore the brunt of welfare cuts. Congestion in their barracks and married settlements reached acute proportions because the reduced community budget discriminated in favour of other races.

Between 1956 and 1962, Emperor's buildings and maintenance programme comprised the construction of new houses, barracks, toilet and showering facilities for the European, Rotuman and half-caste communities; renovations to and repainting of all their houses, barracks and messes; and improvements to the half-caste social hall, billiard room and tennis court. No Fijian houses were built during these years; and expenditure was confined to enlarging the Fijian social hall at Loloma (the company supplying the materials but not the labour), the resettlement of workers from a 'condemned area', and some essential repairs to houses in Matanagata.

With the size of families growing, the single-roomed dwellings built for married Fijian workers before the war were visibly inadequate. The company took steps 'to standardise Fijian housing' by adding a second room to each house, resiting some, and building concrete drains, but the work was not completed 'due to finance problems'. The welfare officer admitted in 1964 that there was 'serious overcrowding in these smaller homes' and that '...as far as public health requirements [were] concerned' they were 'inadequate'.
The practice of 'shelving' Fijian families in barracks also continued in spite of repeated complaints by union officials; and there was, in general, a procrastinating attitude towards upgrading water supplies, sanitation and kitchen facilities. By the late 1960's it had become company policy to consider applications for repair and maintenance work 'on merit'. In reality, little had changed: the roofs of many Fijian houses were reported leaking in 1968, but management proceeded first with renovating furniture in the European houses - replacing beds, chairs and coffee stools etc 'with those of more modern design'.

The colonial government showed renewed concern in the early 1960's over substandard living and eating conditions at the mines. It instructed Emperor to attend to rubbish dumps, drainage and unauthorised dwellings, but because of the industry's plight, withdrew demands for improvements to meet the newly enacted Health (Hotels, Restaurants and Refreshment Bars) Regulations. The death of cattle and fish confirmed the longstanding suspicions of Indian members of the Legislative Council about the purity of domestic water, contradicting official claims that the quantities of industrial waste were negligible.

During debate over the new mining bill in 1965, the government was directly questioned about the nature and efficacy of its safeguards against water pollution. Renewed publicity of a sensitive issue which after thirty years had still not been resolved, led to a new spate of health inspections and water sampling at Vatukoula. Between 1966 and 1970, at least eight of these confirmed that the water was 'grossly polluted' and unsuitable for human consumption. One analysis of tap water in the neighbouring Tavua township
revealed the cyanide content to be 1.7 ppm - nearly eight times more than the threshold limit prescribed by the World Health Organisation. In 1969, there was an outbreak of jaundice amongst mineworkers.62

Emperor was reminded of its legal obligations under the Public Health Ordinance, instructed to ensure that cyanide-bearing effluent was not discharged into the Nasivi river, and, as in the 1940's, requested to construct a proper filtration and chlorination plant.63 Management was more annoyed than receptive to what it called 'the repeated attempts by certain citizens to discredit this Company...' and while agreeing to improve its water supply, continued to withstand pressure to construct a treatment plant on the grounds of cost.64

Expenditure cuts undoubtedly contributed to the high incidence of intestinal infections that occurred during the 1950's and 1960's. Only one outbreak of gastro-enteritis was recorded between 1941 and 1950. In February 1951, however, an epidemic raged through the mining town and the number of monthly cases reported to the dispensary rose steadily in its wake. As with respiratory illnesses, data compiled from company medical records on gastro-enteritis, infantile diarrhoea and dysentery have to be evaluated with several factors in mind - amongst them improved reporting and population growth. The importance of these notwithstanding, the incidence of gastric problems particularly between 1955 and 1963 saw a phenomenal increase (156.7%) out of all proportion to the expansion of the community. It also occurred some years after data collection had been regularised. (see table 7.6)
### TABLE 7.6

REPORTED CASES OF GASTRO-ENTERITIS, INFANTILE DIARRHOEA, DYSENTERY AND UNSPECIFIED DYSENTERY.

VATUKOULA 1952-1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>GE 670</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID None</td>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Cases Jan-June</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases Jul-Dec</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>GE 761</td>
<td>126.8</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>110.1</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>74.2</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>1,098</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID 130</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>GE 1,646</td>
<td>137.1</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID 107</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Cases Jan-June</th>
<th>Av. Number Cases p.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>GE 352</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ID 536</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GE = Gastro-Enteritis    ID = Infantile Diarrhoea  D = Dysentery  UD = Unspecified Dysentery

Source: Data compiled and calculated from Vat/Emperor Company's Welfare Officer's Four Weekly Reports (totalling about 220) to General Manager.
A startling rise in respiratory illnesses also occurred around this time, a development coinciding with a number of changes in the productive basis of mining and the structure of the workforce — notably the heavier reliance on deep level mining, the larger scale treatment by roasting of sulphide ore, and a sharp drop in labour turnover. This being so, the deterioration in health standards apparent in table 7.7, was almost certainly a function of reduced investment in welfare. While available evidence unfortunately excludes a register of deaths occurring at the mines, it is worth noting that fatalities due to congestive heart failure, bronchial asthma, bronchial congestion, bronchial pneumonia and acute bronchitis were recorded.\textsuperscript{65}

The data in tables 7.7 and 7.8 shows the disproportionate incidence of respiratory illnesses at Vatukoula. A similar comparison can be made between the rates of intestinal diseases (like dysentery) at Vatukoula (table 7.6) and in the colony as a whole.

By the mid-1960's, the understaffed dispensary was treating around 200 patients a day. Sick or injured workers, the union complained, had to endure long delays before being treated, and wage deductions for this 'lost time' were common practice. From early 1968, part of the cost of dispensary transport service, including a charge for transporting families, was also passed on to the workers by way of payroll deductions. When this provoked criticism from the Fiji Employers' Consultative Association on the grounds that it violated the Employment (Medical Treatment) Regulations of 1966, the company imposed cash levies on dependants instead.\textsuperscript{66}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Cases Jan-June</th>
<th>Av.Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases Jul-Dec</th>
<th>Av.Number Cases p.m.</th>
<th>Total Cases</th>
<th>Av.Number Cases p.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1,409</td>
<td>234.8</td>
<td>1,792</td>
<td>298.6</td>
<td>1,802</td>
<td>150.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,438</td>
<td>203.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,767</td>
<td>342.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,006</td>
<td>167.6</td>
<td>1,386</td>
<td>115.5</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>184.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,018</td>
<td>274.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I** = Influenza

**B** = Bronchitis

*Source:* Data compiled and calculated from Vat/Emperor Company's Welfare Officer’s Four Weekly Reports to General Manager.
TABLE 7.8
TRENDS IN NOTIFIABLE DISEASES IN THE COLONY
1949 – 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Influenza*</th>
<th>Dysentery</th>
<th>I.D.#</th>
<th>Enteric Group (Typhoid)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>3,566</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>5,293</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3,280</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>4,478</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>3,197</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>2,197</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>8,496</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>5,437</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>4,710</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>2,396</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>12,190</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2,117</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>11,626</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>1,991</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>13,343</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1,767</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>12,964</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>3,295</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>12,163</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>3,538</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>56,282</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>3,347</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>45,915</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>4,748</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>33,447</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>5,669</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>42,937</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>4,477</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>24,459</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5,677</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>42,288</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5,948</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bronchitis was not recorded as a disease in the colony's medical reports, indicating that its incidence was probably low and that diagnosed cases were included in the category of influenza.

# Infantile Diarrhoea

The view that underground mining in Fiji carried no inherent health risks continued to be peddled; and while recognising the advantages of conducting annual medical examinations on young workers (under 21 years) as recommended by an ILO Convention in 1965, the company was against bearing the full burden of time lost through compulsory examinations. So too, the colony's compensation legislation still fell far short of adequate protection. In 1964, industrial diseases listed in the 1950 Model Ordinance from the Colonial Office were finally recognised. There was, on the other hand, still no account of tuberculosis or ankylostomiasis as occupational diseases; and silicosis - the contraction of which was now more likely than in previous years - was withdrawn from the statute books.

As observed in chapter five, underground mining at deeper levels made mine work more hazardous, and the rising frequency and severity of accidents derived from such factors as the intense pressure on workers to be more productive and restricted expenditure on accident prevention. Management itself confessed that the increased scale of development and production, the inadequate supervision of underground operations that now spread over a larger area, and the abandonment of the safety programme (in 1955), were all to be blamed for Emperor's tarnished accident record during the 1950's.

A safety programme - mainly confined to meetings for supervisors and the display of new posters (with public broadcasts explaining these) - was finally resumed in 1963. It was not enough to arrest the alarming escalation of frequency and severity rates. By the end of 1965, these peaked 2.91 and 23.95 - an increase of 903% and 397% over the average rates for 1951. The mining department took a particularly heavy toll with the number of shifts lost through
accidents climbing from 2,744 in 1964 to 4,573 in 1966. The incidence of hand injuries—mainly in the form of lacerations, cuts, severe crush injuries and puncture wounds—continued to be especially high. In 1966, they represented 43.2% of all accidents in the mining department. 70

The economic arguments that had led to the introduction of organised safety work in the 1940's resurfaced in 1966 when Emperor ordered its own investigation into the causes, costs and nature of lost-time accidents. The outcome of this confirmed the prudence of re-establishing 'a proper, effective, safety programme'; and management found itself chastised for obstructing new officers who were keen to promote safe working conditions:

Safety is considered a burden and something which is being taken too far (as if you could possibly take safety too far at E.G.M. at the moment) and when persons are forced to take part in safety schemes they can only offer destructive criticism, and take part half-heartedly and begrudgingly. 71

The services of an industrious staff member, R.H. O'Reilly, subsequently appointed to the position of underground safety officer, promised to stir the company into more than guarded recognition of basic safety requirements. O'Reilly proposed that the wearing of helmets and safety (not ordinary) boots be enforced; that the use of gloves be encouraged amongst all underground workers; that a first aid course for all shift bosses be made compulsory; and that meetings of all underground supervisors be resumed.72 His task proved a thankless one as he too encountered the stubborn resistance of many of his colleagues. One particular thorn in his side was the reluctance of the company to let mineworkers pay for their safety helmets (costing 28/- each) in
instalments. There were also repeated shortages of protective clothing.

The unwillingness of management to support an active safety campaign was, as O'Reilly pointed out, economically irrational as well as impolitic:

The matter of promoting Safety is a trying and most unco-operating assignment in any industry, but is being made more so in this Company when Supervisory Staff flaunt it in your face by referring to Safety Lectures, 'Mines Regulations and Explosive Ordinance' as rubbish and the Senior Supervisor tears up the lectures...

The opinion of some Senior Supervisors may be that labour is cheap and readily available, but not enough consideration is taken to realise that we are still answerable to the Mines Inspector and Department of Labour and Industry.

Labour is not in the least cheap as it costs this Company approximately £4.10.0 per day to have an employee (local) off work due to an accident.

The (government) Mines Department had already become alerted to the disturbing incidence and type of accidents occurring at Vatukoula. And under the direction of E.M. Kennedy - Inspector of Mines between 1966 and 1970 - it took steps to improve safety awareness amongst Emperor's department supervisors. Unsuccessful, Kennedy suggested three alternative courses of action: that the Mines Department increase the frequency of its inspections even if this meant using unqualified assistants; that it consider ordering enquiries into accidents 'with attendant publicity' so that the company 'might be embarrassed into doing something about the accident rate'; or that an official delegation comprising the Commissioner of Labour, Director of Lands and himself confront the company. Some improvement in the mine's safety standards however - evidence of O'Reilley's active campaigning - dissuaded the department from directly intervening. Not until mid-1968 following further
deterioration in the situation was it prompted to apply pressure again. 78

In respect of its workers' compensation legislation, the colonial government acknowledged (by the mid-1950's) that rising living costs and wages made substantial increases in compensation mandatory. In most other colonies, 48 months' earnings had long been established as the basis of compensation for total incapacity, and 42 or 36 months had been standardised for the assessment of death pensions. The threshold of maximum payments for both had also been raised. With the amendment of the 1940 Workmen's Compensation Ordinance in December 1957, 36 and 48 months' earnings were finally adopted in Fiji as the basis for compensation where workers were killed or became totally incapacitated. The ordinance also increased minimum and maximum awards. 79
II State Investment Consolidated

The colonial state played a critical role in the attempts to restore gold production to a more secure footing. In addition to cooperation over the management of organised Fijian labour and the general control of mine labour costs (see section III), it granted a range of economic favours to the Vatukoula companies. In 1952, the group was exempted from paying tax on capital expenditure and was advised that the port and service tax on bullion exports was to be abolished. In return, it was obliged to spend a minimum of £200,000 on development and prospecting over the following three years, permitted to write this off against working profits. ¹

Subsequent approaches to the administration through the 1950's were sympathetically received, the Governor, Sir Ronald Garvey, urging in the Legislative Council that it was incumbent upon the government to search for

any means in its power at present to assist the industry to find the capital it needs, bearing in mind the undoubted difficulties encountered in persuading Australian capital, accustomed to an economy in which gold mining is virtually exempt from taxation, to flow again into gold mining in Fiji. ²

Following Garvey's appeal, the Income Tax Ordinance was amended to provide specifically for the exemption from or reduction in income tax payable by mining companies where the Governor in Council considered this 'expedient for the economic development of the Colony'. ³ Between 1957 and 1959, Emperor was free from all income tax and royalty obligations and guaranteed a further three years' exemption if development continued satisfactorily. ⁴
Tax concessions were not, however, enough and the group pressed for a direct subsidy on gold exports. The government complied and in 1958 approved funds intended to help finance exploration, further mechanisation and extensions to the mill. Its three year undertaking to pay £2 per fine ounce on annual exports of (up to) 75,000 ounces of gold was significant not only for its generosity. As a subsidy on production, it could not hope to induce large scale exploration but rather was more likely to encourage the perpetuation of short term planning and the concentrated exploitation of existing ore reserves.

Concessions to the industry were guided by a number of social and economic imperatives, a central argument being the contribution which gold still made to the economy as an earner of foreign exchange. The expansion and stability of gold exports contrasted with the extreme fluctuations in sugar earnings; while the massive drop in sugar prices and the declining production of copra from the mid-1960's highlighted the advantages of a buoyant if static gold price. The termination of gold production would entail the loss of around 10% in export earnings and increase the colony's dependence on a narrowly based export structure.

Another recurring argument in favour of assistance was the employment opportunities created by the industry. A close down of operations, it was held, would inflict severe 'social and economic dislocation' upon the 5,000 - and by the 1960's 6,000 - strong community. At no stage did the resettlement and re-deployment of local mine labour appear to be considered seriously as an
alternative. As urbanisation escalated and unemployment became more acute in the colony, they were scarcely to be regarded as attractive propositions.  

The government's economic defence of assistance was not in fact as sound as it appeared. After the war, gold never resumed its dominant position of earlier years as a leading export. It raised an annual average of only 13.9% of total revenue from domestic exports between 1946 and 1955, and this figure declined to around 8% over the following decade. Further, there was a sharp decline in direct revenue from the industry as the tax contributions from Loloma and Dolphin were phased out, higher development costs were charged against taxable profits, and tax concessions abounded. Paradoxically, as gold became more marginal to the colonial economy, state subsidisation of the industry mounted. (see table 7.9)

Behind the objective arguments in favour of official patronage, there was evidence of what the opposition Federation Party was later to denounce as 'blackmail' and 'ransom'. Baldly stated, if the colony did not wish Emperor to 'pick out the eyes' of the proven ore, to maximise an immediate return to its shareholders, and to gut the mine, the government was obliged to pick up the tab. Official largesse was evidently not inhibited by the fact that the group's own financial and production strategies had deprived it of sufficient working capital and eroded its reserves.

In 1959, Emperor lodged further submissions: a refund of the port and service tax it had paid on imports (estimated to be worth £75,000) during the three year subsidy period; extended tenure of the subsidy at a higher rate of £3 per ounce from 1961; and
### TABLE 7.9

**ASSOCIATED COMPANIES, VATUKOULA ROYALTY, DUTY AND OTHER DIRECT TAX PAYMENTS, 1950-1966**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Royalty on Gold</th>
<th>Port &amp; Service Tax on Gold</th>
<th>Duty &amp; Tax on Direct Imports</th>
<th>Income (company) tax</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>132,192</td>
<td>14,332</td>
<td>6,376</td>
<td>159,055</td>
<td>311,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>127,331</td>
<td>9,489</td>
<td>12,658</td>
<td>160,612</td>
<td>310,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>44,476</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>19,471</td>
<td>122,621</td>
<td>186,568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23,541</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>7,607</td>
<td>75,408</td>
<td>106,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>13,116</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>5,933</td>
<td>50,892</td>
<td>69,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>10,271</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>7,086</td>
<td>39,489</td>
<td>56,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>4,318</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>9,868</td>
<td>18,235</td>
<td>32,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>10,036</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>10,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>18,230</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>18,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>2,264</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>26,311</td>
<td>11,957</td>
<td>47,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>3,170</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>26,479</td>
<td>9,435</td>
<td>41,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3,861</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>31,564</td>
<td>40,302</td>
<td>41,752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>4,418</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>15,296</td>
<td>40,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>4,774</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>30,008</td>
<td>49,136</td>
<td>49,136</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Years run from January-December until 1964 when they run from July to June.

exemption from income tax and royalty between 1962 and 1966. The official view still pressed that it was 'in the interests of the Colony as a whole that the goldmining industry in Fiji be continued as long as it is an economic proposition'. But urged by the Colonial Office to exercise some caution, the government assigned a London firm of mining consultants - John Taylor and Sons Ltd - to the task of providing a technical assessment of the economic prospects of the mine. The consultants recommended that the current subsidy be continued at the rate of £2 per ounce for another two years from 1961; that the government secure a mortgage debenture or make a loan of £400,000 at 6%; and that it meet the company's request for a refund of port and service tax.

By late 1960, the government was buried in its own financial problems, punctuated by a rising level of unemployment and a credit squeeze by the commercial banks. It also faced a major strike in the sugar industry. In view of the precarious position of the economy, the Colonial Office advised against assistance. An extension of the subsidy was accordingly rejected although the government did agree to reimbursing port and service tax payments (amounting to £44,031) and to exempting the company from income tax and royalty until profits reached an unspecified level.

Emperor's failure to win a further subsidy led to a determined effort to increase production. The levels achieved, management later confessed, went 'beyond what was...provident as far as the ore reserves were concerned.' When in 1965 it again made representations for assistance, it was the depletion of its reserves which it stressed as evidence of the industry's crisis. True to style, Nilsen forced the government into yet another corner: if the
present production policy was to continue, the mine would be gutted in two or three years and shareholders paid off at around 6/- a share. The alternative was for a subsidy of £3/10/- to be paid on every ounce produced over the next three years. In this way, the state would carry about 67% (or £1,050,000) of the total cost of a development and exploration programme. This, Nilsen conjectured, would enable the company to pay a dividend of 3d a year.15

This time, the submission was supported by the Colonial Office.16 By contrast, scepticism and uncertainty marked some local attitudes and, for the first time, provoked questions about the company's motives. Why, the Financial Secretary (H.P. Ritchie) asked, could capital not be found elsewhere? Nilsen's response was that attempts had been made to interest at least four outside mining concerns but that high production costs and the fixed gold price had deterred them from making more than preliminary investigations.17 It was an unsatisfactory explanation for Ritchie who in turn proposed that the company had deliberately made the terms unattractive out of self-interest:

if capital could be obtained elsewhere this would diminish their present shareholders' equity - this was not put in quite this way, but it is what it boils down to. 18

It was particularly telling that shareholders had not been asked to contribute capital to finance development since 1935 when the company had been formed. Shares had only been issued in order to purchase the assets of associated ventures. Furthermore, shareholders had recently received dividends valued at around £90,000.19 The possibility of a loan instead of a subsidy, or of government acquiring an equity share as a condition of assistance,
drew an uncompromising rejection - 'Mr Nilsen threw up his hands in horror at both these questions.' And although the general impression Nilsen projected was one of support for measures to keep the industry afloat, Ritchie reiterated:

Nevertheless, I think he wants money for nothing if he can get it rather than bringing someone else in as partners... 20

Whatever the cynicism, it was the gamble of committing such a large sum without the assurance that new or extended ore bodies would be disclosed that lay behind the government's ambivalence. Ultimately, local investigations supported the verdict of the Colonial Office that '...it would be a grave mistake to permit the mine to close down.' 21 On the strength of this consensus, a local firm of chartered accountants, Price Waterhouse and Co, was commissioned to give financial advice over Emperor's submission. By August the following year, the firm had endorsed the company's claim to penury but had advised against government equity: instead of a repayable loan or a subsidy on production it recommended a grant. A production subsidy was rejected on the grounds that

The only benefit to the Government, apart from averting the re-settlement problem at Vatukoula for the time being, will have been some additional revenue from taxation, whereas the company's shareholders will have received the other benefits. The additional development programme will have been paid for by the Government and shareholders will receive a £30,000 dividend in each of the three years. They will also benefit from ore reserves built up over the three years. 22

A government committee appointed to consider the Price Waterhouse report supported its proposals for annual grants, exemption from income tax, royalty and dividends surtax (for shareholders), and continued profit distribution for the duration of the grants. 23 In September 1967, a motion to provide Emperor with three years of
grants totalling £1,020,000 was carried in the Legislative Council. There were no conditions laid down regarding the use of this money and the company was permitted to pay an annual dividend of up to £30,000 to shareholders during the period of assistance.24

An important development in the colony around this time which influenced the pattern of lobbying by the mining interests was the establishment of a political party system. The ideological foundation of the ruling Alliance party promised to preserve the class structure of colonial society after self-government. The party strongly favoured large scale foreign investment to finance industrial development and, not surprisingly, regarded political stability as a priority if this was to be achieved. A new mining ordinance and regulations permitting royalties to be remitted in whole or part and offering a comprehensive range of tax-deductible items gave practical expression to the first part of this policy between 1965 and 1966.25

Against this, mining capital was for the first time confronted with more than the tame protests against official mining policy that occasionally emanated from within the government. Opposition now took the form of a vigorous challenge from a caucus of prominent Indian politicians within the Federation Party. During debate on the 1967 grant proposal, the party condemned the ease and frequency with which the government had, to the neglect of urgent educational, medical, and other services, and in discrimination against a more seriously afflicted sugar industry which employed thousands more, 'succumbed' to the demands of the mining interests.26 It ridiculed the suggestion that capital was ever invested with 'charitable' intentions:
They try to put up a case to us as if they have come here for the benefit of these 1,800 employees. This is just a smoke screen to create a division amongst us, to create a feeling that, those who are opposing this subsidy are opposing the welfare of these 1,800 employees...this argument if it is carried on illogically is an instrument of blackmail in the hands of such companies whenever they apply for a subsidy and for the Government to succumb to such instrument of blackmail is to show its weakness. 27

By January 1969, the party's opposition to the industry receiving further aid had crystallised into a central issue on its platform. It also prompted a bid for nationalisation. With barbed humour, the Indian member for northwest Viti Levu, R.D. Patel, proposed the motion to nationalise the goldmining industry:

This industry has been run at least for the last 17 to 18 years on a partnership basis between the shareholders of this company and the taxpayer of this country, and this partnership is such that it reminds me of a comic I read some years back. Mutt and Jeff are two friends and Mutt asked Jeff, 'Hello Jeff how about purchasing a cow in partnership'. So Jeff being a simple-minded fellow says 'Oh all right Mutt. We'll go into partnership.' Then Jeff asked Mutt, 'How shall we divide the cow?' So Mutt said, 'Oh all right, you take the front and I will take the back, which means that you will feed the cow and, I will milk the cow.' 28

It was to be expected that a motion tainted with 'a smattering of communism or socialism', as one Minister put it, was unlikely to be seriously considered by the Alliance government. Nationalisation, he charged, was not only inimical to the very notion of a 'free' society but was likely to 'spell doom to the further encouragement of overseas investment'. 29 Opposition from another less predictable quarter added a rather bizarre dimension to the debate. The executive of the mineworkers' union had since the early 1960's become a new target for the company's mendicity; and Sakiasi
Waqanivavalagi, union secretary and Alliance member for northwest Viti Levu, undertook to defend the company in the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{30}

Seduced by the promise of expanded employment opportunities, he condemned the 'cheap' and 'irresponsible' attempt by the Opposition to mislead the electorate. To defend his rejection of the motion, he presented data on Emperor's labour costs and annual royalty, customs and income tax payments. These, he claimed, demonstrated the extent of the company's contribution to the economy and invalidated Patel's argument that the allocation of resources to the industry had been extravagant and inadequately recompensed. The company's wages and salaries bill, Waqanivavalagi noted, had risen by 34.6\% from £678,540 to £913,585 between 1962 and 1967.\textsuperscript{31}

It was curious that the union secretary should abandon data he had used in the council two years earlier revealing the small wages (i.e. local) fraction of the bill.\textsuperscript{32} His new figures were not, moreover, related to increases in the size of the workforce and in living costs. And, to the extent that they did reflect concessions to Fijian labour, they included benefits such as annual leave and superannuation which had for a long time been the prerogative of European and other non-European groups.\textsuperscript{33}
III Changing Patterns of Resistance and New Forms of Labour Control

The transition from a predominantly migrant workforce to a stabilised working class was accomplished during the 1950's. By 1960, over 75% of the Fijian workforce was permanent and at least 5% of all non-European labour had been employed at Vatukoula for 20 years.\(^1\) The development of a class consciousness derived from this but showed no signs of being a steady or simple process. During the early 1950's, the mineworkers' union was concerned above all with the widening gulf between actual earnings and what was considered adequate as a 'living wage' for Fijian workers. Subsistence — now defined more broadly in terms of family support and social security — was the backbone of pressure for wage increases.\(^2\)

From the web of disparate concerns relating to living and working conditions, it was also evident that the racial index of earnings remained a focal point of organised protest.\(^3\) Racial as well as provincial fights still occurred though they were not of the scale or intensity of earlier clashes. The persistence of occupational discrimination which left Fijians still trailing behind Rotumans and half-castes not only in promotion prospects but also in wages and basic leave and sickness benefits, provided the key to residual racial preoccupations. Further, the purpose of Fijian retrenchment in the 1950's was correctly perceived as a means of facilitating the recruitment of more Rotuman labour.\(^4\)

The possibility of a concerted offensive against capital slowly emerged, however, as the strength of racial sectarianism abated.
Non-European labour appeared to identify a common struggle and its emerging class consciousness found bold expression in inter-racial alignments within the union. By the late 1950's, the focus of union agitation shifted noticeably away from the defence of Fijian interests and towards a rigorous drive for improvements in the working conditions of all non-European labour.

A dispute submitted for arbitration in 1955 marked this important watershed. For the first time, Rotuman and half-caste workers were included in the union's submissions. Two years later, the union lodged claims on behalf of Indian tradesmen and drivers and demanded a general wage increase for all non-European workers. In 1959, it pressed for (and won) parity in the basic rates paid to 'ordinary' Indian and Fijian labour.5

There were other developments that were an important measure of a growing awareness of the process of accumulation and specifically the structure of exploitation in the industry. Company allegations of low productivity were refuted by the union and countered by charges that diminished output was a function of the poor standards of (European) supervision, the absence of a formal training programme, reduced ore reserves and other factors beyond the control of workers.6 During arbitration in 1955, the union secretary announced:

"I have read the letter from the Company which mentions about the number of labourers in Australia equal to three and four Fijians; there was an uproar from all sides saying that it was not true - saying that Fijians work hard.' 7

Attacks on the arbitrary barriers to wage and job mobility and on management's prerogative - in the absence of job evaluation - to
determine the value of labour, struck at the very core of the system of earnings. Wage demands for long service workers drew attention to the unyielding rejection of experience as a sufficient criterion of wage determination. And capital's moves to arrest the slide in profits by tighter wage control were openly denounced.

But the ideological thrust of bargaining also extended to demands for a return commensurate with improved productivity— for 'a fair share of the [wealth] they're producing'— and for greater control of work relations. This second grievance was explicitly articulated in the union's efforts to curb retrenchment; to participate in decisions about transfers and the general distribution of jobs; and to eliminate the use of obscene language and other forms of harassment by supervisors that reflected the authoritarian style of management. In 1964, the union charged Emperor with violation of the 'Abolition of Forced Labour Convention' and two subsequent strikes over offensive language by supervisors won massive rank and file support.

The containment of labour unrest was as crucial to the colonial state as to capital if the industry was to survive its financial crisis. The formation of the mineworkers' union under official auspices had held out some promise of stability. But the leadership's apparent failure to restrain a restive workforce— particularly evident in the unofficial work stoppages occurring between 1949 and 1952— and the growing number of registered members from the mid-1950's suggested that the rising 'local barometer' needed new forms of control.
The response to an unofficial strike in August 1952 over time-keeping which brought out over 600 workers and forced the Emperor mine and mill to a complete halt, recalled the state's heavy-handed intervention of the past. Police patrols were brought into the mine area; a security plan stationed detachments in Lautoka and put forces in other centres along the coast on alert; and the address by a respected and high ranking chief, Ratu George Tuisawau, the Roko Tui Ba, added the government's own message of reproach to those delivered by resident chiefs.  

During another (official) strike in 1955, the 'excellent' behaviour of a 4,500-strong community and the maintenance of essential services were similarly made possible by the 'prompt assistance' of the Acting Governor and his staff, the visits of four senior chiefs - Ratu Sukuna, Ratu Edward Cakobau, Ratu George Cakobau and Ratu George Tuisawau - and the 'unassuming organisation of the Police Force'. Some years later, the government allocated a number of special constables (generally used as part of a riot or strike force) to the industry. They were dispersed through different departments at Vatukoula.

Direct intervention of this kind was effective as an immediate means of resolving conflict at the mines but not as a long term solution to the problem of agitation. The concentration and swelling ranks of young and unemployed through the sixties were having a destabilising influence on the whole community; they were also provoking acts of violence reminiscent of earlier years. The dislocation caused by redundancies, reduced work opportunities and a more oppressive work environment was felt particularly harshly by a generation whose dependence on work in the industry was enhanced
with the weakening of psychological and physical ties with villages of parental origin. A steady trickle of school leavers who were unable to find work in other urban centres and had relatives at Vatukoula did little to improve the situation. Cases of property damage, theft, assault and drunkenness were the predominant forms of 'community disturbances' by these young men.\textsuperscript{18}

Increasingly sensitive to the difficulties of controlling a generation of labour raised in 'a multi-racial industrial community' and no longer showing unquestioned allegiance to chiefly authority,\textsuperscript{19} management established a boys' club in 1960, engaging the unemployed sons of mineworkers in 'odd jobs' and 'voluntary work'.\textsuperscript{20} Five years later it decided to direct this restive element into full time (paid) work and to restrict future engagements to this group. The new policy shift was economically as well as socially beneficial for it helped alleviate the housing shortage and lower the wage bill. Wage rates for youth were graded well below that for unskilled labour and were subject only to small half yearly increments. Savings were considerable where boys entered the workforce at 14.\textsuperscript{21}

Under the guise of a census, a witch-hunt for 'jobless parasites' was also initiated. The names of authorised residents in each house were publicised. Management approval became obligatory before any non-authorised persons could be extended hospitality. And posters distributed amongst the various settlements carried an unequivocal message of recrimination:
In Vatukoula today there are many who are living in Company quarters when they have no right to do so. Many of these people are lazy, and of bad character and are like parasites on the backs of the hard working married employees.

People who are causing this overcrowding will...be found out and asked to leave.

All employees are asked to help the Company in carrying out the work of the census. This will benefit all the people who live and work in Vatukoula and will remove from their midst the lazy, jobless persons who are a burden to them.

In an attempt to check the decline in traditional values, to defuse class-based sympathies, and to undermine the credibility of the union, the company also promoted the influence of its racial committees with recharged vigour. In 1956, it formed a welfare department, appointing a Rotuman officer and posting eleven turaga ni koro throughout the Fijian and half-caste settlements.

In support, the government formally approved the distinction between industrial and welfare matters which, since the inception of the union, had been used by management to legitimise its refusal to dismantle the committee system. A conciliation board ruling in 1952 recognised the union as the 'sole' representative of only Fijian labour. It limited the union's bargaining domain further by endorsing the Fijian Committee as the forum responsible for all matters considered non-industrial. Recognition of the union was subject to review and declared 'conditional upon [it] being able to speak for its full membership and enforce discipline...' It could be 'repudiated if the members [took] unauthorised actions outside the Union.'
Segregation in general proved remarkably durable. Fijians were reminded in 1955 that they were 'forbidden to enter the [half-caste] Hall except on the occasion of wedding parties or religious functions, and only then by invitation.' Single Rotumans were moved out of half-caste barracks shortly afterwards. In both cases, the initiative allegedly came from the workers themselves – the half-caste and Rotuman communities respectively – but management was not loathe to oblige. The 'segregation of the single Rotuman employees', it noted, 'will greatly assist in the closer supervision of the Rotuman community as a whole.'

Union demands for desegregation in the late 1960's led to modification but no substantive change to the system. The replacement of the racial by a financial qualification for club membership, for example, permitted certain higher income earning locals to penetrate the corridors of European privilege. But overall, it enabled the company to dismiss charges of discrimination more easily; and provided a more respectable means by which it could continue to exclude the vast majority of Fijians (and some Rotumans and half-castes) from its salubrious recreational venues.

The attempts of the resident Catholic Church to have European children readmitted to its school were more openly resisted. It was 'not fair to the European child', management protested, to dissociate it from its own race and subject it to constant contact with others of different outlook and standards...

The question of whether the European child happens to be a Catholic or not does not affect the issue and our opinion is not based on any form of racial discrimination but purely on what appears to us to be the best for the child.
Only by the late 1960's was the convent open to all races and integration in Vatukoula's two primary schools approved.29

Other initiatives helped to muzzle the emerging spirit of union radicalism. In order to ensure the viability of mining capitalism, it was necessary for the state not simply to suppress but also to prevent industrial disruption. In the conciliation and arbitration machinery, it located an efficient mechanism of labour and wage control. Compulsory arbitration under the 1941 legislation did not make an industrial stoppage illegal as it did in Australia before 1930. By channelling the union leadership into more 'constructive' conciliatory pursuits, it tended, however, to pre-empt or suspend strike action. The Essential Services (Arbitration) Ordinance of 1954 explicitly prohibited strike action by men assigned to winder engine driving or pumping.

The union's acceptance of 'responsible' bargaining through arbitration in turn meant that wage and other demands become subordinated to 'national' considerations because the industry's 'ability to pay' became the guiding principle of arbitration settlements. The union did not relinquish its responsibility to improve earnings and working conditions. But there were obvious contradictions in its support for a policy aimed at shielding capital from interference with production, and its participation in an institution which proclaimed the predicaments of capital as its main concern.30

Arbitration imposed additional constraints on the manoeuvrability of organised labour. Charged with ensuring that its members complied with court rulings, the union leadership was implicitly
required to take punitive action against recalcitrants within its own rank and file. It was already fenced in ideologically and as an organising force, and this disciplinary role merely set the seal on a process of assimilation which sapped its ability to maintain a strong opposition to capital. It was a fate not dissimilar to that of many Western trade unions which, as two Indian sociologists have put it, became 'the policemen of the capitalist' and the 'managers of discontent...fully incorporated into the structure of capitalism...'.

Under increasing pressure to remove the longstanding inequities in mine earnings and to improve working hours and benefits, state arbitration courts approved concessions necessary to contain lingering dissatisfaction. In the main, however, they staved off challenges to the structural basis of Fijian discrimination. Although, for example, arbitration rulings recommended in 1957 and 1959 that job evaluation and trade testing be looked into, it was not until 1961 that this became mandatory. For Emperor, the removal of 'several anomalies between racial groups' was the purpose of evaluation; and it congratulated itself on the fact that it was now 'possible for any employee to progress in accordance with his ability, qualifications and experience.'

Yet the system did not destabilise the structure of mine earnings unduly because it did not dispense with wage differentials 'based on different racial living standards'. There were, moreover, no sanctions to compel the company to consult the union; after two years, only 1.9% of the workforce had benefitted from 'merit payments'; and the remuneration prescribed for evaluated jobs had to
be 'commensurate with the overall capacity of the industry to pay'. This contradicted the very purpose of the system.\textsuperscript{35}

The substitution of voluntary for compulsory arbitration in 1958 complied with the critical view of penal sanctions taken by the International Labour Organisation and the Colonial Office. It was also based on the realisation that the existence of sanctions did not necessarily prevent strike action.\textsuperscript{36} While viewed with alarm by management,\textsuperscript{37} the change did not appear to have any appreciable effect on industrial relations in the mining industry. Under the 'great arbitration illusion' as it has been called, whereby it was believed '...possible under capitalism to have an impartial dispenser of justice between employers and their employees',\textsuperscript{38} the union leadership continued to accept the parameters of protest laid down in the original legislation of the 1940's. It showed itself willing through the 1960's to make sacrifices in the 'national' interest.\textsuperscript{39}

The union's acceptance of indexation as the basis of wage increases undermined the force of its opposition to capital in a specific way. As management announced with alacrity, it 'removed their scope for demanding further increases unless there is a very considerable rise in the index...'.\textsuperscript{40} Indexation indeed proved the main defence against wage demands in 1953, 1954 and 1959.\textsuperscript{41} On the positive side, of course, it enabled mineworkers to regain the purchasing power of their wages. But even in this respect, it was anomalous. First, where a rise in living costs required wage adjustments, the tenure of awards (usually two-three years) and the union's agreement on a number of occasions to defer or waive claims, meant that mineworkers suffered at least short term falls in real earnings.
Second, indexation soon became circumscribed by what - in the state's opinion - the industry could afford to pay. The 1963 award was a case in point: in spite of a wage pause effective from 1959, a 5.7% rise in living costs, an increase in provincial taxation, and evidence of improved productivity, a general wage increase and many other demands were whittled away largely because of Emperor's declared operating loss of £82,000.

The legislative controls governing the registration of trade unions were also consolidated around this time. Under the Trades Union Ordinance of 1964, the Registrar was empowered to refuse, cancel or suspend registration, and even to disqualify an elected union secretary or treasurer if, in his opinion, the officer did not possess a sufficiently high standard of literacy.

At times, management played a conciliatory game. The union's claim of 1960, for example, was held to be 'unrealistic' yet it was decided to give it a hearing and to agree to a few small concessions. This was no capitulation but, rather, a shrewd move to stall an anticipated swing to a more militant leadership; to enhance the company's public image; and to help court state favours. As Nilsen put it bluntly, it would be most unwise, particularly at this time, to close the door to negotiations, more so as I feel the Fiji Government is most anxious to help us with our own financial problems.

The turbulence of the 1959 Wholesale and Retail Workers' strike and riots in the capital had taught a salutary lesson. Concessions were clearly advisable in order to prevent rank and file workers from '...going completely haywire, even to the extent of dumping Nemani and taking on fellows like Tora or Antony as their leader.'
The establishment in 1961 of a forum for 'joint consultation' between the mineworkers' union and management reflected a similar rationale. It offered the union greater accessibility to management and a platform from which to decry the continuing discrimination against Fijians and deteriorating living conditions. It also enabled the union to feel some sense of achievement. The erection of a social hall for single Fijians living in barracks, the devolution of some responsibility to shop stewards, and the introduction of more protective clothing were three examples of successful submissions.47

Yet on the whole, the Joint Consultative Council merely confirmed the weakness of the union's position. There was little pretence of industrial democracy in a mandate which excluded 'wages or conditions of employment' from discussions and which gave the union only an 'advisory' role. Further, talk of 'highest level liaison' and concern about worker welfare paled into insignificance alongside the 'joint' efforts to improve 'efficiency' and the prominence thus accorded to discussions about output, accident prevention, discipline and training.48

The company's perception of the council as a means of communicating and enforcing its own (unilateral) policy decisions recalled the disciplinary task it demanded of the labour committees established before the war. It was intended to (and did) perform the useful task of 'ironing out difficulties', 'avoiding unnecessary strikes' and reducing the items appearing on the union's log of claims because certain grievances could be discussed though not always redressed in council meetings.49 Until 1968, meetings proved irregular and they lapsed entirely between 1962 and 1964.50
The appointment of Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi as union secretary in 1962 signalled another development in the combined efforts of the state and capital to influence the style and conduct of union politics. With its incumbent secretary charged with embezzlement, the union appeared to be in disarray. At the invitation of the executive, the administration intervened in an attempt to salvage the situation. It suggested Waqanivavalagi as a successor.

The appointment was significant: mineworkers were for the first time led by a man from outside the industry who had been taught the principles of 'responsible' trade unionism at Oxford and Harvard and who was unfamiliar with the harsh reality of mine work. Evidently, management now shared Reay's pragmatic view of a 'live' union. It welcomed the appointment, observing that union affairs

...were restored to normal so that it now constitutes once more a body capable of negotiating and of properly controlling its membership. 51

Friction emerged within the labour movement as union policy shifted towards cooperation and moderation. The massive surplus of mine labour during the 1960's gave the union little bargaining power: it was difficult to spurn demands for 'self-abnegation' when this sacrifice was presented as a prerequisite of the industry's survival and therefore the only guarantee of continued employment. 52 Rank and file unrest - demonstrated in a number of unofficial strikes (four in 1960 alone) and in declining support for the union - appeared a response to the conservatism of the leadership. By 1962, following its agreement to a wage pause in exchange for job evaluation, its membership figures reached their lowest ebb at 600.
An industrial agreement the following year scored a victory for the company that added to the discontent, for following protracted negotiations, workers found themselves in receipt of only a nominal concession of 4d-8d per shift. It was certainly a mark of internal dissension that management should record that '...certain outside forces would have gained support on the field and we could have had serious trouble' had the agreement not been signed so quickly.

Though union support was reactivated by the latter part of the sixties, the failure to bring appreciable improvements to wages and conditions of employment strained internal relations to the point of explosion. As complaints were voiced about Waqanivavalagi's leadership, Apisai Tora, President of a strong Airport Workers' Union in Nadi and prominent leader of the 1959 Suva strike, emerged as a favourite for the position of secretary amongst a faction of Federation Party supporters.

The challenge to Waqanivavalagi not only testified to a radical swing in terms of expectations about earnings and other working conditions, but indicated a more pronounced political dimension in the industrial struggle. The push for alignment to the Indian dominated Federation Party certainly appeared an important measure of class unity. It showed the extent to which communal loyalties had dissipated and it spelt a rejection both of traditional authority and the alliance between European capital and the Fijian chiefs on which the governing Alliance party was founded.
Tora's nomination was invalidated in 1967 under section 31 of the Trades Union Ordinance; but by the end of the decade the rift within the mineworkers' union culminated in a resurgence of militancy. With the election as union secretary of a young underground miner, Navitilai Raqona, the way was paved for a dramatic change in the pattern and temper of organised resistance.
CHAPTER SEVEN - REFERENCES

Section I


2. See General Manager to Managing Director P.F. Cody, 17.9.51; General Manager (Cayzer) to Managing Director (John Wren), 31.8.53; General Manager to Chairman of Directors, 1.10.54, Dolphin Mines Ltd Annual Reports for 1951, 1953 and 1954.

3. In 1953, management celebrated – somewhat ironically – a financial policy which had guaranteed 'no over-capitalisation'.


5. Minutes of Staff Meeting & Luncheon, 27.3.53, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.


9. See C.A. Minutes of Meeting of Dept Managers 5.4.51, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File; Cayzer to Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna SFA, 17.4.51, Vat/; Nilsen to Theodore, 14.6.46, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN.

10. These percentages are calculated from provincial rates given for each province in Provincial Council Reports 1946-1956.

11. By the late 1950's, banana production was still a principal source of revenue for the districts of Eastern Viti Levu (Tailevu, Naitasiri and parts of Ra) but large areas under cultivation were abandoned in favour of wage employment. This was held to be a major cause of unemployment. Import restrictions were imposed by New Zealand in 1958. For discussion of the problems of the banana industry see CS memo, 12.2.59, CSO F36/15 Pt 1; Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies draft telegram (confidential) No 42, 12.4.59, CSO F36/15 Pt 1; Leg Co Debates 1958 Budget.


15. Nilsen to Theodore, 8.3.48, Vat/Correspondence EGT/NEN; Cayzer General Manager EGM to District Officer Ra, 7.5.52, Vat/; C.W. Cayzer General Manager to Roko Tui Macuata, 22.11.52, Vat/.

16. C.W. Cayzer General Manager to Roko Tui Macuata, 22.11.52, Vat/.

17. See unsuccessful requests from Savatu district and Tailevu province in 1960 and 1963 for group employment to raise funds for road construction and district school debt. Fijian Administrative Assistant Western to General Manager EGM, 1.7.60, Vat/District Officers and Commissioners Correspondence; ibid Watson General Manager to District Officer Nausori, 30.8.63.

18. Minutes General Manager's Advisory Committee Meeting, 2.7.56, Vat/. The number of Europeans employed fell from 76 (4.8%) to 53 (2.9%) between 1958 and 1965. See C.A.

19. These observations are based on employment data available in Returns of Employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula for four weekly periods between 1954-1963.

20. See C.A; C/L Annual Report for 1952, CP No 29, 1953.

21. Leg Co Debates, Governor's Address, 26.11.54.

22. Nilsen to Governor (Sir Ronald Garvey), 25.2.56, Vat/Emperor and Loloma Confidential Current File.

23. Calculations based on Returns of Employees, Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula for four weekly periods between 1949 and 1969.

24. Governor (L.B.F. Freeston) to CS minute extract, 8.6.49, CSO F36/173.


26. The estimated Rotuman population in Jan 1943 was 3,200 and of these only 650 were males between the ages of 18 and 50, not all able-bodied. The 'Yanawai' carried between 50 and 60 passengers only. See CP No 17, 1942; Mine Superintendent to General Manager EGM Confidential, 20.7.48, Vat/; Extract from Report by J.W. Sykes on visit to Rotuma in 1948, CSO F24/48.
27. The penalty for emigrating without the permission of the District Officer under Regulation 3, Emigration Ordinance Cap 91 1945, was 20/- It was, according to Sykes, an 'insignificant sum these days to Rotumans and surely no deterrent.' And there was the additional problem of extracting the fine from the offender once he had left Rotuma. Extract from Report by J.W. Sykes on visit to Rotuma in 1948, CSO F24/48.

28. ibid Rotuma Council Meeting, 4.3.48. The council suggested that a quota of 25 be distributed amongst seven districts.

29. ibid R. Bevington (for CS) to District Officer Rotuma, 6.8.48.

30. ibid District Commissioner Southern minute, 9.5.53. By the late 1950's, it was generally argued that Rotuma's 'overpopulation' required that 'about one quarter of their population have to emigrate to other parts of Fiji because the island cannot support its whole population'. See Leg Co Debates Rotuma Lands Bill Debate, Attorney General (A.M. Greenwood), 8.4.59.

31. Extract from Report by J.W. Sykes on visit to Rotuma in 1948, CSO F 24/48; Governor to CS, 8.6.49, CSO F36/173; ibid Governor to Nilsen, 15.7.49.

32. General Manager's Address, Emperor Annual Report 1952.

33. Minutes of Staff Luncheon & Meeting 2.4.54, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.

34. MR/Bunch 20, M541/1 Pt 3.


36. Watson to Nilsen Chief General Manager, 4.5.65, Vat/Information given to Chief General Manager on visits 1964-1965.

37. Vat/Confidential Salaries Staff etc Jan 1945-Oct 1948; EGM List of Salaries & Wages paid to European Staff & Operators at 9.3.49 and 15.9.54, Vat/Emperor & Loloma Confidential Current File; Vat/N.E. Nilsen Chief General Manager Correspondence 1964-1968; Secretary & Manager of Administration to Chief Timekeeper memo, 20.3.59, Vat/Sundry Memo; Vat/N.E. Nilsen Chief General Manager Correspondence 1964-1968.

38. Secretary & Manager of Administration to H.G. McAlpine, 14.11.58, Vat/Sundry Memo; Secretary & Manager of Administration to Assistant General Manager memo, 7.12.61, Vat/Community Sundries; Cost & Revenue Statement European Mess year ending 12.6.63, Vat/Items given to N.E. Nilsen during visits; A. Watson General Manager to Nilsen Chief General Manager Melbourne, 22.7.64, Vat/N.E. Nilsen Chief General Manager Correspondence 1964-1968.
39. Minutes of Staff Meeting & Luncheon, 27.3.53, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.

40. In 1953, for example, about 14% of the Fijian workforce was laid off. See Minutes of Staff Luncheon and Meeting, 27.3.53, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File; ibid Minutes of Dept Managers Meeting, 5.7.55.

41. Minutes of Staff Luncheons & Meetings, 27.3.53 and 21.3.55, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.

42. Minutes of Staff Meeting, 21.3.55, Vat/Community Sundries.

43. Nilsen Chief General Manager to H. Ritchie, Acting Financial Secretary, 24.1.61, Vat/EGM Gold Subsidy.

44. Emperor Annual Reports 1960-1968; Talanoa vol 1, No 2, 3.6.66.


46. See for example Minutes of Dept Managers Meeting, 5.7.55, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File; ibid Chief General Manager (N.E. Nilsen) to Local Secretary EGM Co Melbourne, 7.7.55.

47. Minutes of Dept Managers Meeting 5.7.55, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File. In 1963, a similar strategy was proposed. See Vat/Community Sundries 1963.

48. Minutes of Dept Managers Meeting 5.7.55, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.

49. Labour Inspector, K.T. Valili, to Labour Officer Western, 3.4.69, Labour Dept 36/I/21/16-A.

50. ibid Labour Officer Western to Secretary/Commissioner of Labour, 31.3.69; Leg Co Debates, C.A. Shah, 25.4.69.

51. The Employment Ordinance restricted the volume (to 50%) and the range of items deductible from wages (i.e. excluding the ration store account). Although it provided for exemption, the Labour Department claimed there was no written authorisation of this on record for EGM. The 'arrangement whereby employees were virtually obliged to buy from the Company's store' also contravened the Truck Act. See Secretary/Commissioner of Labour minute, 18.3.69, Labour Dept 36/I/21/16-A; ibid Secretary/Commissioner of Labour to General Manager EGM, 10.4.69; ibid Deputy Commissioner of Labour to Secretary/Commissioner of Labour minute, 3.4.69; ibid PLO to Secretary/Commissioner of Labour, 23.4.69.

52. ibid Secretary/Commissioner of Labour to General Manager EGM, 10.4.69.

53. Minutes of Staff Luncheon & Meeting, 27.3.53, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.

55. R.H. Yarrow, Welfare Officer to General Manager, 30.9.64, Vat/Gold Mining Joint Consultative Council.

56. Meeting Joint Consultative Council minute, 15.7.68, Vat/E.B. Turner Joint Consultative Council Notes; Welfare Officer to General Manager Report for four weeks and financial year ending 28.6.67, 4.3.68, Vat/Emperor Mines Period Reports 27.7.66-June 1967; Welfare Officer to General Manager Reports 3.4.68 and 12.6.68 and Welfare Officer to General Manager Report 1.5.68.

57. See Vat/Welfare Officer four weekly reports to General Manager, 1962-1967.

58. A visiting health inspector ordered the company to provide walls, a ceiling and a tiled floor in the dining room. These were amongst the improvements dropped after the Health Board agreed to treat the premises as an open air canteen. Secretary Central Board of Health to Cayzer General Manager, 27.11.62, Vat/Depts of Education, Medicine, Forestry, Immigration and Labour 1961-1963.

59. Leg Co Debates Question by Indian Member for Northwest Division and Answer, 4.12.56, CSO F63/58 Pt 3; Leg Co Debates Answer to Question by C.A. Shah 25.4.69; ESCAP Regional Mineral Resources Development Centre Report No 146 'Environmental Impact of Gold Mining at Vatukoula in Fiji' by Herman Stigzelius, Bandung, October 1981, p 21.

60. Leg Co Debates Semesa S. Sikivou, 22.6.65.

61. Health Inspector Ba/Ra to Welfare Officer EGM, 19.8.66, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager EGM, 23.5.68, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 1.8.68, Vat/; Secretary Tavua Rural Health Authority to General Manager, 20.2.69, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 16.9.69, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 17.12.69, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 11.8.70, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 11.11.70, Vat/.

62. ESCAP report 1981 op. cit. p 21; SDMO Tavua to Manager, 9.3.70, Vat/.

63. Director Medical Services to General Manager, 1.3.68, Vat/; Director Medical Services to Watson, 6.5.68, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 1.12.69, Vat/; Health Inspector Tavua to General Manager, 12.5.70, Vat/.

64. Watson General Manager to Director Medical Services, 12.3.68, Vat/.

65. Vat/Welfare Officer four weekly reports to General Manager, 1952-1968.
66. See C.A.

67. 'A Brief History', 19.11.53, Vat/.


69. Welfare Officer to General Manager, 5.7.57 and 29.7.58, Vat/Emperor Mine Period Reports Dec 1956-June 1958.


71. ibid

72. Underground Safety Officer (O'Reilly) to General Manager, 13.12.66 and 3.2.67, Vat/EGM Safety Campaign; ibid Underground Safety Officer to Secretary, 22.4.67; ibid Underground Safety Officer to Mining Engineers & Foreman memo, 7.12.66.

73. The company refused to agree to payment by two installments because of the additional paper work that would be incurred and because it did not believe that workers found a single wage deduction difficult. ibid Underground Safety Officer to Secretary, 22.4.67; ibid Secretary to Underground Safety Officer, 19.5.67.

74. ibid Underground Safety Officer to Management memos, 3.2.67 and 17.3.67.

75. ibid Underground Safety Officer to Acting General Manager, 21.8.68.

76. See C.A; IOM to Director of Lands, 30.3.67, MR/Bunch 20 M541/1 Pt 3.

77. Kennedy (IOM) to Director of Lands, 28.2.67, MR/Bunch 20 M541/1 Pt 3.

78. ibid IOM to Director of Lands, 30.3.67; IOM to General Manager EGM, 3.7.68, MR/Bunch 20 M541/1 Pt 4; ibid IOM to General Manager EGM, 16.8.68; ibid Senior IOM (Kennedy) to General Manager EGM, 31.10.69; see C.A.

79. Meeting Finance Committee minutes extract, 23.12.55, CSO F36/3 Pt 4; ibid C/L to CS, 16.11.56; ibid Director Public Works to CS minute, 4.12.56; Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Ordinance, No 30, 1957.
Section II

1. Leg Co Debates Governor's message, 26.4.52; Leg Co Debates Supplementary Estimates, 31.8.67; Emperor Annual Reports 1952.

2. Leg Co Debates 'Message from H.E. The Governor (Sir R.H. Garvey) to Legislative Council', April 1957.


4. Leg Co Debates Financial Secretary, 31.8.67. Tax and royalty concessions were withdrawn from June 1958 and the subsidy received from government was then included in the company's accounts for the purpose of tax and royalty assessment. See C.A.

5. Vat/Standing Committee on Financial Assistance to the Goldmining Industry; Leg Co Debates, Financial Secretary, 31.8.67; see C.A.

6. See Leg Co Debates 'Message from H.E. The Governor to Legislative Council', April 1957; Report of Fiscal Review Committee Debate, Director of Lands, Mines and Surveys, 20.8.58; and Supplementary Estimates, 31.8.67. For other arguments in favour of assistance see C.A. One opposing argument was that state funds would be better spent on the rehabilitation of redundant mineworkers. Leg Co Debates, A.I.N. Deoki, 16.12.64.

7. Leg Co Debates, Financial Secretary, 31.8.67.


9. Leg Co Debates, Financial Secretary, 31.8.67.


14. See C.A.

15. See C.A; Leg Co Debates, Financial Secretary, 31.8.67.

16. See C.A.
17. The companies approached were Placer Development Ltd Vancouver, Cyprus Mines Co, Los Angeles, Ashanti Gold Fields Co Ltd, London, Homestake Mining Co, San Francisco. See C.A.

18. See C.A.

19. See C.A; Leg Co Debates, Financial Secretary, 31.8.67.

20. See C.A.

21. See C.A.

22. See C.A.

23. See C.A.


27. Leg Co Debates, R.D. Patel, 1.9.67.


29. Leg Co Debates, C.A. Stinson, Minister for Communications, Works and Tourism, 31.1.69.


31. Leg Co Debates, S.N. Waqanivavalagi, 25.7.68 & 30.1.69.

32. Total amounts paid in wages for 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1966 were £41,752, £41,000, £40,000 and £49,000 according to Waqanivavalagi. See Leg Co Debates, S. Waqanivavalagi, 1.9.67.

33. Fijian annual leave benefits, for example, were brought into line with other races in 1965; and a Fijian superannuation was scheme established the following year.
Section III

1. Secretary & Manager of Administration to File, 26.6.59, Vat/Special File EGM.

2. See Secretary FMWU (Basilio Mata) to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 29.10.53, Vat/; Basilio Mata Secretary FMWU to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 26.1.54, Vat/; Evidence given by Basilio Mata and Capt. Mullins, Compulsory Court of Arbitration June 30th 1955, Vat/.

3. See Log of Claims and Strike August 1952, Vat/; Cayzer General Manager to Commissioner of Labour, 9.4.59, Vat/.

4. See Minutes of Meeting with Fijian labour representatives, 18.3.53, Vat/; 1959 Dispute, Vat/.

5. Secretary FMWU to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 7.4.55, Vat/; Secretary FMWU (Mata) to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 10.8.55, Vat/; Memo of Claims of FMWU for submission to the Court of Arbitration, 7.5.57, Vat/; Arbitration Award May 1959, Vat/.

6. Evidence given by Basilio Mata and Ulaiasi Tolu, Record of Arbitration Court into Mineworkers Dispute, Suva, 30.6.55, Vat/. Evidence given by Basilio Mata and Ulaiasi Tolu.

7. ibid Evidence given by Basilio Mata.

8. ibid Evidence given by Capt. Mullins and Ulaiasi Tolu; Nemani Waka Secretary FMWU to General Manager, Memo of Claims of FMWU for submission to the Court of Arbitration 7.5.57, Vat/.

9. The union demanded 1/- per day increase for men employed between 5 and 10 years and 2/- per day for those employed more than 10 years. Nemani Waka Secretary FMWU to General Manager, 20.3.57, Memo of Claims FMWU - Arbitration Proceedings Aug/Sept 1957 & Mar/May 1959, Vat/; EGM Co Ltd Reply to the Memo of Claims submitted by the FMWU to the Court of Arbitration, 7.5.57, Vat/.

10. Chief General Manager (N.E. Nilsen) to Local Secretary EGM Co Melbourne, 7.7.55, Vat/; Record of Arbitration Court into Mineworkers Dispute, Suva, 30.6.55, Vat/.

11. Nemani Waka Secretary FMWU to General Manager EGM Log of Claims, 8.3.60, Vat/; Memo of Meeting between Executive FMWU and General Manager, 5.6.63, Vat/.

12. Section 15 of the March 1965 agreement committed the company to 'the principle of consultation with the Union' over proposed redundancies. Further detail on the conflict over this question can be found in Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi Secretary FMWU to General Manager, 7.5.63, Vat/; and Labour Officer Western minute, 30.5.69, Labour Dept 36/1/21/16-A. For objections to swearing etc by supervisors, see General Manager (Cayzer) to Dept Managers memo, 14.10.52, Vat/; Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi to Secretary & Manager of Administration, 21.5.64, Vat/; and
Report on Board of Enquiry - Industrial Dispute between FMWU and EGM Co by A.J. Jeddere-Fisher, June 1964, Vat./.

13. ILO Convention No 105, 1957. See Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi to Secretary & Manager of Administration, 28.5.64, Vat/; Fiji Times & Herald 6.6.64, 22.7.64 and 9.4.68; Report on Board of Enquiry - Industrial Dispute between FMWU and EGM Co by A.J. Jeddere-Fisher, June 1964, Vat./.

14. From 1956, union membership rose to over 1,000. See Labour Dept Annual Reports from 1956. For details of unofficial strikes see C.A; C/L Annual Report for 1950, CP No 34, 1951; District Commissioners Annual Reports for 1951, CP No 1, 1953.

15. C/L Annual Report for 1953, CP No 18, 1954; Cayzer General Manager to Local Secretary Melbourne, 22.8.52, Vat/; see C.A.

16. Nilsen Chief General Manager Associated Mining Companies to A.F.R. Stoddart (Officer Administering the Government); Nilsen Chief General Manager to Sukuna, 8.7.55, Vat/.

17. Minutes of Meeting of Dept Managers 5.4.61, Vat/Meetings of Executives Current File.


19. The 1955 strike was a case in point: the administration dispatched Ratu Sukuna and Ratu Edward Cakobau to the mines in an attempt to persuade workers to await arbitration, but a secret ballot declared an overwhelming majority in favour of strike action. For another example, see Welfare Officer to General Manager, Report for four weekly period and financial year ending 10.6.64, Vat/Emperor Mine Period Reports 10.7.63 - 22.10.64.


21. Boys aged 14 received a wage of 8/- per day and this increased to 13/11 by the time they were 18. Secretary & Manager of Administration E.B. Turner to A. Watson, NSW, 19.8.64, Vat/Gold Mining Joint Consultative Council.

22. Joint Consultative Council Meeting, minutes 15.12.65, Vat/Gold Mining Joint Consultative Council. Management actually proposed that authority cards be issued to each family. Every person would then be required to give proof of his/her right to be on the field and charges of trespassing would be laid against unauthorised persons. These more drastic measures were not, in the end, introduced. See ibid Joint Consultative Council Meetings, minutes 23.4.65 & 13.1.67.

23. Nilsen Chief General Manager to Sukuna, 8.7.55, Vat/; Welfare Officer (Yarrow) to General Manager, Report for four weekly period & financial year ending 20.6.56, Vat/Emperor Mine Period Reports August 1955-Nov 1956.

25. Acting General Manager D.T. Mitchell, Notice: Part European Social Hall Rules, 25.11.55, Vat./.


32. See in particular Memo of 1952 Settlement, 13.10.52, Vat/; D.M.N. McFarlane (Arbitrator) to Acting CS, 5.7.55, CSO F36/215; and Awards for August 1957 and May & Sept 1959, Vat/.


34. Minutes General Manager's Advisory Committee Meeting, 2.7.56, Vat/Community Sundries.

35. Secretary FMWU to General Manager memo, 6.6.63, Vat/; Cayzer General Manager to Local Secretary EGM, 26.10.59, Vat/.

36. Leg Co Debates Industrial Disputes (Arbitration and Enquiry) Bill, Commissioner of Labour, 31.3.58.

37. Nilsen urged that the oil and mining companies together push for the reintroduction of compulsory arbitration. Nilsen Chief General Manager to Cayzer, 29.3.60, Vat/FMWU – Arbitration Proceedings Aug/Sept 1957 & Mar/May 1959.


40. Cayzer to Local Secretary EGM, 14.10.52, Vat/.
41. Secretary FMWU (Basilio Mata) to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 29.10.53, Vat/; General Manager Cayzer to Secretary FMWU, 6.11.53, Vat/; Basilio Mata Secretary FMWU to Secretary Associated Mining Companies, 26.1.54, Vat/; General Manager Cayzer to Secretary FMWU, 2.2.54, Vat/; Cayzer to Secretary FMWU, 22.10.54, Vat/; General Manager Cayzer to Secretary FMWU 28.2.59, Vat/; Arbitration Award 21.5.59, Vat/.

42. Chief General Manager Nilsen to Cayzer General Manager, 15.3.57, Vat/FMWU-Arbitration Proceedings Aug/Sept 1957 & Mar/May 1959; Award Sept 1959. Wage indexation was officially abandoned in 1955.

43. For details of this see Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi Secretary FMWU to General Manager Log of Claims, 7.5.63, Vat/; Memo of Meeting between Executive FMWU & General Manager, 5.6.63, Vat/; Meeting Manager Associated Companies, Executive FMWU and Labour Commissioner (J. Amputch), 20.6.63, Vat/; Memo of Meeting between Manager of Associated Companies Vatukoula and Dept of Labour Conciliation Officers held 10.7.63, Vat/; Memo of Meeting held between Management and Dept of Labour Conciliation Officers held 11.7.63, Vat/.

44. Trades Union Ordinance No 4, 1964.

45. Chief General Manager Nilsen to Cayzer, 30.3.60, Vat/FMWU - Arbitration Proceedings.

46. Chief General Manager (Melbourne) Nilsen to C.W. Cayzer, 21.3.60, Vat/FMWU - Arbitration Proceedings Aug/Sept 1957 and Mar/May 1959. Concessions included increased sick pay (to 4/-), additional leave benefits, a tool allowance, an ex gratia payment of 3d to Indians as a contribution to housing, and an increased night shift allowance (to 6d). For details see Memo of Interview between FMWU, Cayzer, Amputch C/L, 8.4.60, Vat/.

James Anthony and Apisai Tora were protagonists of the 1959 strike. For discussion of this, see Hempenstall, P. and Rutherford, N. Protest and Dissent in the Colonial Pacific, Suva: USP, pp 73-86; Sutherland, W.M. 'The State and Capitalist Development in Fiji', Ph.D thesis, University of Canterbury, 1984; and the Commission of Enquiry into the Disturbances in Suva in December 1959, CP No 10, 1960.

47. Interviews with half-caste fitter and turner and member of Joint Consultative Council (during the 1960's) Suva, August 1982, and Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi, Suva, August 1982.


49. Interview with half-caste fitter and turner...Suva, August 1982.
50. A unanimous resolution at the end of 1961 empowered the council to 'assist' in industrial disputes or disagreements between the company and the workforce. Even when its constitution was redrafted in 1968, its function remained 'solely consultative and advisory'. The scope of subjects it could raise similarly remained unchanged though its mandate was now specified as 'excluding terms and conditions of employment or like subjects which are covered by the current Union Agreement...'. For details of the benefits and constraints of 'consultation' see Joint Consultative Council Special Meeting 6.11.61; Joint Consultative Council Agreement 1961; and Minutes of Council Meetings Mar, Apr, July and Dec 1965; Apr, Oct & July 1966; and Jan 1969, Vat/.


52. See Ramaswamy op. cit. pp 68-70 for a brief discussion of the 'theory' of responsible trade unionism.

53. Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi Secretary FMWU to General Manager, Union Log of Claims, 7.5.63, Vat/; Memo of Meeting held between Management Associated Companies Vatukoula and Dept of Labour Conciliation Officers held 11.7.63, Vat/.

54. Memo of Interview between Nilsen Chief General Manager of Associated Mining Companies Vatukoula, Mateo Barawai President and Sakiasi Waqanivavalagi Secretary of FMWU on 13.7.63, Vat/; Items given to N.E. Nilsen during visits.

55. See C.A.

56. Section 31, Ordinance No 4, 1964 prohibited anyone from holding office in more than one union.
APPENDIX 2.1

PROSPECTING LICENCES IN THE YANAWAI DISTRICT, 1909-39

P.L. 30 The Fiji Prospecting & Mining Syndicate
43 J. Malcolm
50 J.H. Jamieson
51 J.H. Jamieson
52 J.H. Jamieson
53 E.F. Powell & J.H. Jamieson
67 F.B. Spaeth
70 F.A. Archibald, W.H. Creighton & H.J. Wright
91 F.B. Spaeth
92 D.G.S. Whalley
94 J.I. Dods
95 J.I. Dods
97 W.H. Creighton & J.H. Wright
98 E. Cresswell
104 J.I. Dods
105 J.I. Dods
107 F.J. Evetts
108 E. Cresswell
109 J.A. Muir & G. Whalen
111 M.J. Dods
112 F.A. Archibald
127 W.V. Terry
139 J.E. Michelmore
140 B.E. Archibald
141 M.W. Gordon
142 J.L. Gordon
143 A.O. MacKenzie
144 G.P. Donovan
148 W.V. Terry
149 M. Cameron
150 J.L. Stark
154 D. Cameron
155 F.B. Spaeth
156 C.B. du Pertuis
158 A.T. Acton
159 C.L.N. Bentley (transferred to Vatukaisia Mining Co Ltd; transferred to Mount Kasi Mining Co N.L.)
160 R.C. Kerkham (transferred to I.R. Cameron transferred to F.B. Brown)
161 O.E. Provis (transferred to C.T. Griffiths)
162 F.G. Spaeth
163 F.B. Spaeth
165 E. MacKenzie
166 A.O. MacKenzie
167 G.P. Donovan
169 M. Cameron
170 J.L. Stark
172 W.V. Terry
173 D. Cameron
174 L.W.G. Williams
175 A.T. Acton
176 Mt Kasi Mining Co N.L.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P.L.</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>F.B. Brown (Transferred to G. Mitchell)</td>
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<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>C.T. Griffiths</td>
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<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>F.G. Spaeth</td>
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<td>183</td>
<td>F.B. Spaeth</td>
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<td>205</td>
<td>A.O. MacKenzie</td>
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<td>206</td>
<td>G.P. Donovan</td>
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<td>211</td>
<td>D. Cameron</td>
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<td>212</td>
<td>F.A. Smith</td>
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<td>226</td>
<td>J.L. Stark</td>
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<td>227</td>
<td>Mt Kasi Mining Co N.L.</td>
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<td>228</td>
<td>G. Mitchell</td>
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<td>229</td>
<td>W. Mitchell</td>
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<td>231</td>
<td>F.A. Smith</td>
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<td>233</td>
<td>C.T. Griffiths</td>
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<td>239</td>
<td>Mount Kasi Mines Limited</td>
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<td>Kasi Development Limited</td>
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<td>E. Hathaway</td>
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<td>374</td>
<td>Vatukaisia Mining Company Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>377</td>
<td>E. Hathaway</td>
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Source: MR 30/.../377/ML2-1
APPENDIX 2.2

TAVUA AREA - LICENCE HOLDERS, 1933-1936

P.L. 207 P. Costello
208 G.C. Foulis
209 H.L. Morton
210 J.H.H. Millett
213 A. Aitken
214 A.F. Thompson
215 W.E. Goodsir
216 W.B. Ragg
217 R.A. Brooks (transferred to E.G. Theodore)
218 W.G. Lawler
219 H.B. Morton (Jr)
220 J.H. Davies (transferred to W.C. Nicholson)
221 R.H. Roskelly
222 J.H.H. Millett, F.A. Archibald, E.S.G. Ruthven
223 T.H. Coster
224 V.S. Ruthven
225 Tavua Gold Developments Ltd
226 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
227 Tavua Gold Developments Ltd
228 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
229 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
230 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
231 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
232 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
233 Mineral Developments (Fiji) Ltd
234 Tavua Gold Developments Ltd
235 Tavua Gold Developments Ltd
236 Gold Mines of Fiji N.L.
237 Gold Mines of Fiji N.L.
238 Fiji Gold N.L.
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302 Tavua Gold Developments Ltd

Source: MR 207/...302/ML1/3 to 5-1
MEMORANDUM of AGREEMENT under The Masters and Servants Ordinance, 1890, made the ............. day of............. 1936. BETWEEN the Emperor Gold Mining Company Limited, of Tavua Goldfield, Colo North, in the Colony of Fiji, (hereinafter called the "Company") of the one part and ................... (hereinafter called the "worker") of the other part.

1. The said worker shall for the term of............. months from the date hereof serve the said Emperor Gold Mining Company Limited as ...................... .......................................................... .......................................................... ..........................................................

2. The said Emperor Gold Mining Company Limited shall during the continuance of this agreement pay to the said worker on the regular pay day on every fourth Saturday, wages for each day worked by him at the rate of ...................... Provided that if the wages rate for the worker as set out in this clause does not exceed two shillings and sixpence per day then, in addition to the daily wages agreed to in this clause, the Company shall pay a bonus of two shillings for each completed week of service when the Company, in its discretion, considers the work performed is satisfactory.

3. In addition to the wages provided for in Clause 2 herof rations on the following scale shall be provided:

DAILY

Bread, 1 lb.
Fresh or Corned Beef, ½ lb. or, when meat is not supplied, 1 tin of Salmon
Rice 1 lb. When Yams, Dalo or other native vegetables are issued in sufficient quantities rice ration is to be reduced to half a pound.
Sugar, ½ lb.

WEEKLY

Tobacco ................ 2 ozs
Soap .................... 4 ozs
Tea ..................... 4 ozs
Salt .................... 8 ozs
4. The ordinary hours of labour for the said worker shall be forty-eight hours in each week divided, so far as practicable, in the discretion of the Company, evenly over the six ordinary working days.

When more than 48 hours in one week are worked by the worker he shall be entitled to be paid at ordinary rates for the extra time worked, or, in the alternative, shall be entitled to equivalent time off in a subsequent week.

When the worker is required to work on Sunday he shall be entitled to equivalent time off in a subsequent week.

5. The Company shall during the continuance of this agreement provide the worker with proper lodging in accordance with the provisions of the Fijian Labour Ordinance of 1895, and shall provide medical care as if Section 17 of the Labourers Medical Care Ordinance of 1891 were applicable to the worker.

6. If the worker is married and brings his wife and family (if any) to the place of employment the Company shall provide suitable house accommodation for such married worker and his wife and family (if any), and, until garden land is provided for cultivation of native food by such married worker, shall issue to him for his wife and family (if any), in addition to his ordinary rations, rations equal to one-half the ordinary rations.

7. Upon completion of service under this agreement the Company shall provide the worker with a return passage to the place whence he first embarked for the purpose of his engagement with the Company, namely

8. The said worker shall at all times during the continuance of this agreement faithfully and diligently employ his whole time in the service of the Company and obey the lawful commands of the Company's representatives.

Signed by the Employer in the presence of: ___________________________ EMPLOYER

Signed by the Worker in the presence of: ___________________________ WORKER

District Commissioner

Source: Vat/Native Affairs Camps Reports 1935-
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East Reefs Consolidated, Aloha Central, Loloma West, Vatukaisia Mining Co Ltd, Fiji Gold NL, Tavua Gold Options Ltd, Vuda Prospecting Syndicate, Homeward Bound Syndicate, Nasivi (Fiji) Gold Syndicate NL - private correspondence and published reports/statements of accounts, Melbourne Stock Exchange Mining Collection, Melbourne University Archives of Business and Labour.

(ii) Trade union/Employers' association records

Fiji Mineworkers' Union - correspondence and minutes of meetings with Associated Mining Companies, Vatukoula; logs of claims and submissions to conciliation boards and arbitration courts, Emperor Gold Mining Co Ltd holdings, Vatukoula.
- constitution and rules, office bearers, and audited financial statements, Registrar of Companies and Trade Unions, Government of Fiji, Suva.
- correspondence files, Fiji Trades Union Congress, Suva.

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3. **Official Printed Material**

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**Fiji Colonial Reports**

**Fiji Government Civil Lists**

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(ii) Australia


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The Herald (Melbourne)

The Queenslander

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6. Interviews

A wide range of interviews was carried out with mineworkers previously and currently employed with the Vatukoula mining companies in Vatukoula, Suva, and Lautoka, Fiji; incumbent and ex-management personnel, government officers and union officials in Vatukoula and Suva, Fiji, and Sydney, Australia.

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