FIJI AND THE FRANCHISE

A History of Political Representation,
1900-1937

Ahmed Ali

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Australian National University
This thesis is based on my own research except where otherwise acknowledged.
This thesis attempts to explain the nature of the Crown Colony constitution of Fiji. Hence it concentrates on the demands of the inhabitants of the Colony and the response of the rulers. The problem that confronted the rulers was a complex one in that they had to deal with the conflicting aspirations of three distinct communities. The nature of these demands for representation in the Legislative, Executive and Municipal Councils, are analysed in some detail as well as the steps that were taken by the administration in response. This thesis explores the reasons that motivated the political demands of the various ethnic groups and shows how far these were realized. Further the methods whereby the rulers reached their decisions, and their motives for these, are examined and commented upon. Thus the work endeavours to throw some light on political aspects of colonial constitution-making in a plural society by its discussion and analysis of the often conflicting interplay of the political aspirations of the contending ethnic groups.

Since the issue of the franchise in Fiji was largely a struggle for political rights first for Europeans and then for Indians, these two groups receive the greatest attention. Chapters I and II discuss European efforts to obtain the franchise and then on receipt of it to consolidate the political position of the community. The original European intention of obtaining democratic representative government is modified when Indians begin to agitate for political rights. The next two chapters (III and IV) discuss the Indians' political awakening and the Government's efforts to enfranchise them. The discussion in Chapter IV highlights the constraints upon the Government in enfranchising the Indians. The dissatisfaction (Chapter V) of some Indians with the nature of the franchise granted to them opens a new source of conflict, the constitutional implications of which are discussed in Chapters VII, VIII and IX.

Since the Fijians were not the proponents of constitutional change they receive considerably less attention. But they cannot be ignored,
as their presence and rights were the crucial determinants in the process of political change in their native land. Hence they are the subject of Chapter VI which concentrates on describing and explaining Fijian aspirations and reactions. But the chapters that follow also take full cognizance of the Fijian point of view and assess its impact. Seen from this dimension the thesis studies European-Indian political goals in relation to the native position and the doctrine of the paramountcy of Fijian interests which was in existence in this Pacific colony much earlier than it was enunciated in 1923 in Africa.

Chapters VII, VIII and IX are essentially concerned with the consequences of the enfranchisement of the Indians. The Indians found the communal franchise granted to them inadequate. Instead they demanded a common franchise (one man one vote) and they pursued this with a single-mindedness that split their own community and angered and frightened both Europeans and Fijians. Chapter VII, on Muslim separatism illustrates that common roll was as unpalatable to a significant Indian minority as it was to Fijians and Europeans. The reaction of the anti-common roll elements including the colonial regime was to seek the total abolition of the elective principle, both in the Municipal boards of Suva and Levuka and in the Legislative Council. Chapters VIII and IX detail the steps towards constitutional retrogression and attempt to fathom the reasons behind the action.

While the municipal franchise was abolished the compromise authorized by the Secretary of State for the Colonies preserved the elective principle in the Legislative Council though nomination of candidates by the Governor was re-introduced. Chapter IX concludes with an examination of demographic and economic factors that aroused European and Fijian anxiety.

The Conclusion (Chapter X) briefly sums up what the earlier chapters have discussed in considerable detail. It admits that the colonial regime was prepared to grant communal franchise to both Europeans initially and to Indians later. The Government was, moreover, willing to allay the fears of minorities such as the Europeans and Muslims. But it was unwilling to concede to a common franchise demanded by a vocal section of the Indian community because this was repudiated by a majority of others as it presaged Indian political domination which threatened the very basis of colonial policy in the colony. In all its decisions the regime remained true to its original undertaking that in Fiji, Fijian interests were paramount.
Fiji became a British Crown Colony on 10 October 1874. It was the consequence of problems created by the encroachment upon Fijian society and its habitat by Europeans. Though contact between Fijians and Europeans began in the late eighteenth century and continued thereafter it was not until the late eighteen sixties and the early seventies that Europeans began to flock to the shores of these islands with the intention of settling permanently and indulging in western economic pursuits which put a premium on Fijian land and labour. Most of these settlers were British but there existed no legal forms whereby Britain could exert her authority on the activities of her sons domiciled in this foreign archipelago.

If Westminster was concerned so were the Fijian leaders. Their people and their way of life were becoming involved in the processes of change that accompanied culture contact. Fijian society at the time, to generalize and ignore regional variations, was characterized by a hierarchical structure with political power vested in the person of an autocratic chief. To him and his person subjects owed allegiance and fealty and he in turn was their spokesman, guide and leader, though not priest, as this function belonged to another individual. Though the hereditary principle existed in the nomination of chiefs this could be overlooked if a rival claimant possessed outstanding qualities of leadership which outshone those of a weak heir likely to be a liability rather than an asset to the tribe. In the late nineteenth century chiefly rule, in the politically significant 'states', such as Bau, Cakaudrove and Lau, was at its height and those in command showed consternation at the arrival of Europeans in search of land for trinkets and labour for not much more. Not only chiefly status but the whole ethos of Fijian life seemed endangered. From such a catastrophe the chiefs searched for protection. Both the tovata system and the Cakobau Government (1871-73) were attempts to reconcile European and Fijian interests so as to accommodate the invader without destruction to the indigenes.
Both failed because European interests found restraints distasteful and the Fijian political system was inadequate for its people's safety in the new situation of flux. Thus the Fijian chiefs requested British annexation which after much reluctance from the latter arrived in 1874. The reluctant guardians undertook to protect the Fijian people but into the 'dual' society, the exigencies of policy made them introduce a third element, Indian British subjects as labourers. In obtaining Indians for Fiji, the Government in its correspondence according to the Sanderson Committee, had recognized 'the value of Indians as permanent settlers' and had been 'willing to concede them the enjoyment of equal rights'. (See Chapter III, p.69.) But the European settlers, predominantly of Anglo-Saxon stock and conformists to the belief of the time, saw themselves as superior in intellectual and cultural terms and in accordance with practices elsewhere, especially neighbouring New Zealand and Australia, expected a British regime not to subordinate their aspirations to those of subject races. The regime, however, interpreted its duty to be pronounced in the Deed of Cession, which its Governors regarded as a charter stating that Fijian interests were its paramount concern. Here lay the first problem of constitution making: how to reconcile what heterogeneous groups deemed their rights without betraying promises.

Basic to the political problems of a plural society is the differing numerical strengths of the components in its population. In Fiji the difficulty was compounded by the continuing decline of the indigenous population from 1874 until 1905; there was a slight improvement for the next few years until the influenza epidemic of 1918 which affected all communities in Fiji but struck hardest at the Fijians of whom somewhere between 5,000 to 7,000 died in two months. Thus in 1919 the Fijian population sank to its lowest level, an estimated 83,000. Though it improved thereafter Fijian numerical superiority was being undermined by the rapid growth of the Indians. Meanwhile the Europeans showed very slight increases and by 1936 they were numerically overtaken by the Part-Europeans who were in the same electoral category. But most significant was the demographic growth of the Indians which was transforming Fiji into a multi-cultural country. Further, these Indians were no longer migrants, they were
becoming, at least after 1920, if not earlier, permanent settlers. Their children increasingly saw Fiji as their own home; the number of Fiji-born Indians had risen from 27.48% in 1911 to 71.59% in 1936. Fiji-born among Europeans had also grown in the same period from 28.82% to 36.67%. Whereas in 1874, Fijians had invited Britain to guarantee for them their survival in their own native land amidst threats from a small but active European element, in the twentieth century they were progressively being forced to share their patrimony, gradually diminishing, with rapidly multiplying Indians. The new circumstances, for the Fijians and Europeans too, seemed to presage an Indian take-over.

The disparity of numbers and ratio was further compounded by differences in the standard of living and levels of western education which was a crucial criterion in the ability to manage western political institutions. The Indians, numerically the largest component, were the most disadvantaged when it came to adult literacy, which for them, was 13.32% in 1936. (See Appendix VI for Literacy Rates of the various components of Fiji's population.) Europeans found it intolerable that they should run the risk of being governed by such a community; therefore they opposed any political modus vivendi that might make this a possibility.

Fears of Indian political supremacy can be best understood if the economic background of the period under study is outlined. Changes in the economic environment had their implications for political development especially when they altered and affected relationships between the communities. And at the outset it ought to be noted that the colony's economy was dependent upon Fijian land, European capital and Indian labour. Further the economy possessed an agricultural base.

European capital initially found expression in plantation agriculture and commerce. With the advent of the C.S.R. Company in 1882 and its expansion and establishment of a monopoly it became the single most important manifestation of European capital. Besides it controlled the industry that was the lifeblood of Fiji. The depression of the 1880's severely hurt the planters and drove many into insolvency. Those with finance who remained 'could do well enough in planting' but the reality of the nineteenth century was that 'when money was actually made in Fiji it came, not from plantations, but from trading with Fijians at a high mark-up'. (Scarr 1972:122.)
In the twentieth century the condition of the planters improved, but temporarily. The years immediately preceding and including the war were boom years. Thereafter conditions deteriorated culminating in the economic depression which began in 1929. In Fiji the Europeans were among those who suffered most severely as a result. (See pp. 270-71.)

A consequence of the economic changes mentioned above was the change in occupational orientation of the European population. Their source of livelihood was no longer predominantly dependent upon the plantation; they were moving into the towns, into commerce and into administrative positions in the private sector and to a lesser degree in the Government which continued to be expatriate dominated. The shift to towns, especially Suva, had important political implications as this study elaborates. Later the influx of the non-Europeans into Suva aroused a reaction. (See Appendix III for demographic changes.)

While the European position in the economy was changing in focus that of the Fijians was altering very slowly. Throughout this period they continued in their traditional vein though a small percentage moved out of their villages to seek occupation elsewhere. According to the 1911 Census this group, including children and unemployed represented 6.22% of the total indigenous population; in 1921 it rose to 8.16% while by 1936 it had declined slightly to 7.39%. From 1925 onwards Fijians evidenced a move towards settling as farmers on their own land. But generally their communal life based on subsistence agriculture persisted. (See Chapter VI for a discussion of the Fijian position). They were mostly occupied in growing their own food although in the coastal areas of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu and in other outer islands copra was their mainstay. In the interior of Viti Levu banana cultivation was important. A few were involved in the sugar industry; by 1936 some 1,131 Fijians were growing sugar cane on a commercial basis, according to the Stockdale Report. In comparison with the other communities their role in the cash economy was minimal except as consumers; in fact they were conspicuously absent from it. Though they were the largest landowners they were non-competitors in agriculture with other ethnic groups in the colony. Their greatest asset was land; its possession was essential to their survival. In an agricultural economy its availability was a crucial issue and problems surrounding it inevitably acquired political
overtones. As landowners they were sensitive to the politics of the land and mindful of their rights but showed considerable generosity in their willingness to make it available, provided their future was safeguarded, for limited leases as the resolutions of the Council of Chiefs in 1933 and 1936 illustrated.

It was the Indians who showed the greatest vitality and diversification in the colony's economy. Indians who decided to remain in Fiji after having served their indenture, did so with a desire to prosper. Their quest for political rights was linked with their ambitions for material advancement. The place they sought in the Fijian sun was both political and economic. Their diversity is amply illustrated by their occupational distribution, especially when it is related to that of the others. (See Appendix V.) Certain features, however, need emphasis. Indian diversification began very early with the labourers who had completed their indenture. The Immigration Report of 1886 showed that business licences were issued to Indians: 21 to hawkers, 5 to bakers, 21 to retailers. According to the 1896 Report there were 142 hawkers, 89 retail storekeepers, and 19 possessed both wholesale and retail licences. By 1911, 4% of the employed Indians were in commerce and competing successfully with Europeans. (Mayer 1963:29.) They were quick to invade the European preserve of commerce and this trend intensified with time. Later they were to clamour for education and with it for white-collar jobs. The majority, however, found the land the most remunerative source of income. Here too they began quickly to compete with European sugar cane growers. With fewer wants and a frugal style of life and longer hours in the field, and largely dependent on their own toil they could manage and survive on smaller returns to their investment than the Europeans. When the labour shortage in the second decade of the twentieth century ended the plantation era in the sugar industry and forced a reorganization therein, it was again the Indians who played the crucial role in the C.S.R. Company's scheme of the 'small farmer system'. Their success is attested by the fact that they became overwhelmingly the dominant producers of sugar cane. They had in fact replaced their former masters - the servant had been quick to cast off dependency. Since the C.S.R. was an efficient and exacting task-master it put the onus on the Indians to keep pace.
with its requirements in order to succeed. Besides Indians saw sugar cane as the most profitable crop and they invariably chose it rather than engage in growing another for commercial purposes. Company pressure and the Indian will to survive and prosper made for advancement. Yet profitability in the sugar industry also posed problems. Bad relations between Indians and the Company carried over from the indenture days—suspicion and distrust prevailed on the Indian side while the Company failed to recognize the need for a new outlook in its attitude towards Indians who had become free labourers. The price of cane and wages of labourers were often bones of contention: the Indians always felt they were not receiving their fair share while the Company argued that it provided the best that could be offered in the circumstances of vacillating markets and intense competition from places such as Java where labour was considerably cheaper.

Another cause of Indian uncertainty involved leases. From 1912 to 1922 C.S.R. Company tenancies were for 5 years and thereafter for 10 years with provision for renewals. Tenants deemed this unsatisfactory especially when there remained the risk of eviction. According to Ayodhya Prasad, a farmer and unionist, who founded the Kisan Sangh (Farmers' Union) in 1937, the Company was frequently ruthless in this respect. (Prasad 1962:46.) As agriculturalists the availability of land was an important consideration for Indian farmers. After 1920 there were persistent demands for longer leases, especially on Fijian land. These pressures along with Indian economic expansion brought anxiety among Fijian leadership who feared Indian encroachments upon their own position. Thus Indian economic involvement threatened not merely Europeans by competition but impinged upon the Fijian position as well. And the political contest for the franchise ought to be seen against this background.

The economy of the colony developed in a social environment of inequalities which also affected constitutional change. There was in Fiji no firm policy of racial segregation or colour bar but race was a crucial criterion in certain situations. (See footnote 33, p.259.) Again it was the Indians who expressed the greatest indignation against these practices. They sought equality and argued that all forms of debarrment and segregation gave them an inferior status. The Indian attitude was also formed by what it considered the neglect and slowness of the Government in providing adequate facilities for
Indians. It was not until 1916 that the first government school for Indians was established. The government, however, was prepared to grant financial assistance to mission schools and those run by Indians themselves but the Indians always demanded more. Indian dissatisfaction was often aggravated by pronouncements such as that of the C.S.R. Company to the Education Commission of 1926. (C.P.46/26.) The Company opposed education that would 'create a Babu class with a desire for clerical or indoor work in the towns'; the desire was to keep Indians as agriculturalists not to train them for white collar professions.

In the colonial environment the superiority of all things European was an accepted article of faith as was the privileged social position of the Europeans; any questioning of these rules or calls for equality from non-Europeans aroused anger. Indians proved vocal in their complaints against inequalities which the regime condoned. While the Fijians were prepared to accept European guidance (see Chapter VI) Indians resented the Europeans' status and wanted an equal voice in the administration of the Colony. Their quest for the franchise was partly directed towards this goal. While Fijian leaders in the period remained content to allow British Governors to decide on the pace of political development their Indian counterparts clamoured for changes. And this background of Indian assertiveness, European reaction, Fijian anxiety and the dictates of government policy and obligations set the scene for the determination of the nature of the franchise for Fiji.

No studies of political change in Fiji between 1900 and 1937 have hitherto been undertaken. Carl Rosberg in his thesis (1954) on communal representation did consider Fiji along with Kenya and Ceylon but his work relied solely on published material and briefly glanced at events beyond 1937. Despite his pertinent comments on the nature of communal representation he made no attempt either to examine in
any detail how the various communities were enfranchised or to study the processes that brought about constitutional change in Fiji.

This thesis attempts to explain the nature of the Crown Colony constitution of Fiji. Hence it concentrates on the demands of the inhabitants of the Colony and the response of the rulers. The problem that confronted the rulers was a complex one in that they had to deal with the conflicting aspirations of three distinct communities. The nature of these demands for representation in the Legislative, Executive and Municipal Councils, are analysed in some detail as well as the steps that were taken by the administration in response. This thesis explores the reasons that motivated the political demands of the various ethnic groups and shows how far these were realized. Further the methods whereby the rulers reached their decisions, and their motives for these, are examined and commented upon. Thus the work endeavours to throw some light on political aspects of colonial constitution-making in a plural society by its discussion and analysis of the often conflicting interplay of the political aspirations of the contending ethnic groups.

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Racial inequality lay at the root of the brand of colonialism which developed in Fiji and affected constitution-making in the Crown Colony. This element, pervasive in the system of British rule, stirred strong emotions, both in those who held to it as a dogma and those who denounced it as an intolerable injustice. In this study it is considered frequently and critically—frequently, because it influenced decisions and sometimes constituted an area of collusion between European rulers and settlers; critically, because the writer has no sympathy for racism, a viewpoint which is undoubtedly injected into the writing and for which no apology is made.

Just as Europeans drew inspiration from their brethren in other colonies so did the Indians find encouragement from the country of their origin and their compatriots in other parts of the Empire. In particular, the position of Indians in Kenya merits mention. But the concern of this thesis is essentially with Fiji and comparisons with Kenya and Imperial history generally are employed only when they help to elucidate and explain an issue or an incident under discussion. The part of Fiji in the broader context of imperial history is left to the conclusion. Only where external events have a direct influence
on the Fijian scene are they discussed. Thus the impact of events in India and the role of the India Office on constitution-making in Fiji are granted appropriate emphasis.

The franchise in Fiji was a subject not confined to representation in the Legislative Council. It was related to a struggle between Europeans and Indians to control the municipal councils of Suva and Levuka. Suva, the capital, and the centre of European entrepreneurial power, as well as their chief residence thus assumes great significance. Levuka tended to follow political trends that originated in Suva in terms of municipal franchise. Hence this subject has been granted its due space in the thesis. The issue of the franchise was a quest for power and equality, to have confined it solely to the Legislative Council would have solved only half the problem. To have won in one place and lost in another would have been no victory at all.

In Fiji's history the period 1900 to 1937 was important in that it saw: the introduction of communal franchise, European efforts to obtain self-government and then a retreat from this position to seek the reintroduction of nomination with the emergence of Indian political militancy, the alliance between European and Fijian, the determination of the colonial administration to maintain its policy of paramountcy of Fijian interests. All these factors established by 1937 were to be crucial in the later constitutional advancement of Fiji from a colony to an independent state. These factors were largely responsible for the period of constitutional stagnation until 1963. (See Appendix X for a note on constitutional change after 1937). And they were equally prominent both in rapid changes that occurred in the next seven years and in determining the nature of the constitution that heralded the end of colonial tutelage without communal strife in 1970. No appreciation of the recent constitutional and political events can be adequately made without an awareness of the processes involved in the momentous decisions on the issue of franchise during the years 1900 to 1937. If the study of the past enables in us a better understanding of the present, then this is sufficient justification for the present study.

No other country in the Pacific, apart from Papua-New Guinea, perhaps, is bedevilled by the constitutional dilemma that confronted and still confronts Fiji. Though Fiji was a small British colony,
poor in wealth and distant from Whitehall the magnitude of its constitutional problems were among the more complex ones that British politicians had to consider. Hence a study of this archipelago permits us to examine yet another facet of that controversial subject of our times, colonialism.

To the writer, Fiji means home, and he belongs to one of the communities involved in the story of the following pages. Though he denies conscious bias he does not deny involvement. And an Indian viewpoint may be evident; the reader alone can judge the degree of it, but that judgement in turn will be coloured by the reader's own predilections.

A participant has certain advantages. My long and continuous contact with Fiji has permitted me to incorporate in this work discussions with individuals and observations made over years of residence there. It has put me in a position to pick up chance remarks and to listen to conversations where grievances were aired or the Government condemned or the rare official given even rarer praise. Frequently the 'facts' of the speakers might have been garbled or incorrect but listening to them permitted an appreciation of their sentiments and for research this was no more hazardous than taking notes at formal interviews characterized by self-justification and rationalization of past action.

For collection of information from Indians my knowledge of Hindi saved me from the dangers inherent in using interpreters and gathering data other than at first hand. However, my insufficient acquaintance with Fijian deprived me of a greater breadth in discussion with members of that community and limited me to those who understood English. If there are advantages for the local historian there are disadvantages too. Because he belongs to a particular group others sometimes tend to be cautious or reluctant to provide him with the information he is seeking. Sometimes he may be deliberately misled. These difficulties, encountered by all historians, are perhaps particularly acute for the locally-born historian of Fiji who must constantly, when researching and writing, keep up a guard against the bias likely to enter his work as a result of his formative years being spent in a particular ethnic and cultural milieu.

My tenure as full-time Secretary of the Alliance Party of Fiji from May 1969 till February 1970 provided me with the rare first-hand
opportunity of observing the workings of local politics at very close range. This experience proved invaluable in trying to fathom the motives of individuals, and this might explain my reluctance to be persuaded by the stated case of politicians and their supporters in their efforts to justify their actions and to secure their ends. Besides it is the historian's task to attempt to probe the reasons behind a statement or action and not rely purely on the words of colonial politicians or officials. The dangers in critically assessing the record, the matrix in which the official view is set, are summed up best by the late Professor Davidson:

...the many overtly academic works that reveal unintentionally the writer's belief in the virtues of colonial rule. The policies of the governors, usually adequately documented, emerge as sensible and high-minded and the reactions of the governed, often little understood, as stubborn and misguided.

(Davidson 1968:3.)

Since the type of writing that Professor Davidson castigates still persists it is essential that the point of view of the governed should be understood and appreciated. And this can perhaps best be imaginatively engaged with by those who belong to this category.

The writer's investigations have led him to conclude that colonial rule was not always high-minded; benefits that might have accrued from it occurred largely in spite of it, not because of it. Secondly there was often a considerable difference between the pronouncements in London and the practices of officials in the colonies. In Fiji, this was shown by the reliance which some Governors placed on the advice of local European politicians. Instances of this association are highlighted in this study in order to amplify this aspect of colonialism in operation.

IN writing this thesis I have incurred many debts which I must acknowledge.

The late Professor Jim Davidson and the Australian National University provided the opportunity which made this study possible. Professor Davidson also read and commented on drafts of Chapters V and
VIII. He had intended to do the same for Chapter IX. His kindness enabled me to suspend my scholarship from 1 July to 31 December 1972 so that I could accept a visiting lectureship in History for a semester at the University of the South Pacific in Suva.

In Fiji, the National Archivist, Mr. S. Tuinaceva, made readily available the material in his care and willingly gave up his time to answer my numerous queries. Members of his staff were equally obliging whether in searching for files, usually at very short notice, or in microfilming documents.

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The National Library of Australia in Canberra obtained on microfilm from the Public Records Office, London, the C.0.83 series for the years 1921-40.

Dr. K.L. Gillion of the University of Adelaide read drafts of Chapters III, IV and VII and provided helpful criticism.

Doug Munro kindly lent me the manuscript of his article on 'Island Confederation and George Westbrook'. Paul and Jenny Alexander generously lent me their typewriter for the master copy.

Keith Mitchell drew the map and Mrs. Rosamond Walsh and Mrs. Rita Matthews typed the final draft of some of the chapters.

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Ahmed Ali.
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I

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FRANCHISE

Shortly before Fiji was ceded to Britain, Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated in the House of Lords: 'Looking at the past history and the future of these Islands, I should say that a Crown Colony of a rather severe type in form should be adopted.' After 1874 this dictum proved particularly true on the issue of constitutional reform. It was the policy of the first substantive Governor, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon (1875-80), that achieved this result. Gordon interpreted his duty as a mission to safeguard and guarantee the rights and status of the Fijian people in their native land. For him, the Deed of Cession whereby the majority of the Fijian chiefs, and through them their people, surrendered their autonomy to the British Crown, became a covenant wherein was enshrined the paramountcy of Fijian interests. For their part, the Fijian chiefs, and through them their people, regarded the document in similar light. Gordon by his land and labour policies and by his deliberate association of the Fijian chiefs in the government of their people laid the foundation for mutual trust between the alien ruler and his indigenous subjects. Gordon's successors, especially Sir John Bates Thurston, consolidated his objectives. Thus it can be claimed that by the end of the nineteenth century the paramountcy of Fijian interests had become an unassailable pillar of colonial rule in Fiji.

But this was not achieved without challenge. The European settlers, overwhelmingly British, whose activities had been responsible for cession, proved indignant and intransigent. They had expected British rule to usher in utopia where land and labour would be plentiful and cheap and they would receive British political institutions which would enable them to fashion their

destiny while the natives became their subjects. Gordon saw it otherwise. He had scant use for the settlers; he saw them as obstacles and would have been joyed had they removed themselves elsewhere and left him to pursue his mission unobstructed. His land policy forbade the alienation of Fijian land; his labour policy and native taxation scheme drastically curtailed and severely restricted the availability of Fijian labour to work on European plantations. The Fijian chiefs supported his efforts. As for democratic political institutions, they did not arrive. Instead the autocracy of a crown colony run by a Governor with a Legislative and Executive Council of officials was everywhere evident.

There was, however, a concession. An ordinance passed in April 1877 created the partly elected Municipal Board of Levuka. The members of the board were a warden (appointed by the Governor), the Stipendiary Magistrate of the district, two persons nominated by the Governor, one of whom had to be a medical officer, and six other persons elected by the ratepayers. Every ratepayer had one vote for every twenty shillings paid by him in rates. With the removal of the capital from Levuka to Suva, a new town came into being and a new ordinance, No.V of 1883, was enacted.

The number of ratepayers in a town determined the size of its town board: a town with between 300 and 600 ratepayers had a board of six members; one with 600 to 2,000 had eight members; and one with over 2,000 had ten members. The franchise was defined by Clause 14. Any male living in the town who fulfilled the required qualifications and who was 'a natural-born or naturalized' British subject could enrol as an elector. The warden

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2 'The occupier or owner of rateable property within the town shall be entitled to cumulative votes in the following manner:

1. When the annual value of property assessed does not exceed twenty-five pounds he shall be entitled to one vote;

2. When the annual value of property assessed is over twenty-five pounds and does not exceed seventy-five pounds he shall be entitled to two votes;

3. When the annual value of property assessed is over seventy-five pounds and does not exceed one hundred and fifty pounds he shall be entitled to three votes;

4. When the annual value of property assessed is over one hundred and fifty pounds he shall be entitled to four votes.'
was chosen annually by the ratepayers from those already elected to the town board. Auditors were also appointed by election.

In constitutional terms the significance of the elected municipalities lay in that the franchise stipulated property not race as a qualification to vote. Moreover all the names of those who qualified were registered on a common roll. Initially these were Europeans but as the nineteenth century moved towards its end, this monopoly began to be eroded, albeit extremely slowly.

For the Europeans this limited franchise proved inadequate. They chafed, protested and sought redress. Their agitation took the form of demanding federation with neighbouring colonies. New Zealand was approached in 1883 and 1885 and Victoria in 1887. Enthusiasm in Fiji was confined to a minority and aroused insignificant response in the colonies with whom federation was sought. The Fiji colonists hoped that by federating with one of these colonies they would inherit their political institutions wherein settler wishes held sway. Thus the Europeans in Fiji would become masters in their own home and not tenants at will of a colonial Governor. But Whitehall refused to countenance such a device it was unwilling to transfer the control of a large native population to the whims of a minority. Again the doctrine that in Fiji, Fijian interests had primacy of place was being reiterated.

These rebuffs settler politicians treated as temporary setbacks. And in 1900 federation with New Zealand again reared its head and found support from New Zealand's Premier, Richard John Seddon, a man with imperialist dreams in the Pacific. Unlike the previous attempts, the movement for federation in 1900 attempted to attract, although unsuccessfully on the whole, Fijians with promises to remove inconvenience caused them by the prevailing native policy of ruling according to Fijian customs especially through the indigenous chiefs, some of whom became, after Cession, paid servants of the Crown. The leader of the federationists at this time, Humphry Berkeley, was able to obtain some support from native dissidents but only from malcontents who were insignificant and whose

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3 For a study of the Federation Movement in Fiji, 1880-1902, see Ali 1969.
grievance against the ruler was a personal one, such as dismissal from the service for negligence or defalcation, the most common failing of Fijian civil servants. The Governor, Sir George O'Brien, who had a personal antipathy towards Humphry Berkeley and his brother the Chief Justice, over-reacted to the whole situation, including the involvement of Richard Seddon. Fearing a possible native uprising that might threaten British rule in Fiji, he took stern measures and made severe pronouncements. These, on the one hand offended Seddon and on the other aggravated O'Brien's already strained relations with the Berkeleys and their friends. And though the attempt to federate Fiji with New Zealand in 1900 failed, O'Brien's heavy-handed actions led to a change in the Governorship with the appointment of Henry M. Jackson as his replacement. Whitehall felt this necessary because serious political as well as personal and social difficulties recently arisen in Fiji, "make it desirable that the Governor should be a tried administrator and also a man of tact and discretion in dealing with social matters of an unofficial nature". In practical terms it meant someone who did not come into open conflict with the European colonists. Of these men O'Brien was largely contemptuous, and therefore, unfavourable to their requests for constitutional change. The settlers saw Fiji as the country of their permanent abode and felt that they too should possess Anglo-Saxon institutions which permitted them a voice in the control of their own affairs. Being in close proximity to the self-governing dominions of Australia and New Zealand, they sought similar representative institutions. It is certain that had New Zealand been in the same constitutional strait as themselves, i.e. a crown colony dominated by an autocrat appointed and controlled by Whitehall, they would not have sought federation with it. By becoming a part of New Zealand they thought they would obtain an identical constitution. But they were too few in number, in a colony where the coloured population outnumbered them by no less than 10 to 1, for their wishes to prevail. Nor did they and the colony possess adequate resources to be able to work representative

4 Draft C.O. to Treasury, 18 May 1902; C.0.83/73. Only those despatches initially read on microfilm in the National Library of Australia are given the C.0.83 series reference number.

5 O'Brien to Anderson, Private, 1 Oct. 1900; C.0.83/71.
institutions successfully. Besides, this form of government was anathema to those interests which kept Fiji economically solvent, that is, the sugar companies, especially the Australian giant, the C.S.R. Company. The success of their business in Fiji was dependent on a cheap and plentiful supply of labour imported from India which would have been curtailed by India had Fiji become a 'white' dominion. A viable colonial economy which made no demands on the British taxpayer was, for Whitehall, more important than placating white colonists. It was for this reason that the C.S.R. Company was consulted when Jackson recommended changes. In fact the directorate of the company had explicitly requested earlier that its voice be heard in any proposed changes to the colony's constitution. 6

After the conflict with O'Brien, the arrival of Jackson in the colony was welcomed by the European settlers. Though Jackson was no radical in settler terms, he was nonetheless willing to listen. He had been asked by the Colonial Office to consider and report on Seddon's suggestions for a more liberal constitution for the Europeans in Fiji. Jackson saw no difficulty on this point and so advised Whitehall. 7

For their part the Europeans were willing to show a spirit of compromise. They recognized the futility of fighting the Governor and decided on co-operation. Their first step was taken after one of their number, James McConnell, a planter from Taveuni and formerly member of the Assembly in the Cakobau Government in 1871-1874, had a discussion with Jackson and reported to his compatriots that the new man at Government House was not adverse to political change. Consequently a meeting, not of the public as was the habit previously, but an exclusive one of 'those having large interests in the Colony' was called at Suva. 8 The meeting devoted itself to the task of improving the political position of Europeans only. Its opinion was that the Crown Colony system

7 Jackson to C.O.39, 24 Apr.1903; C.O.83/76.
8 The Report of the meeting was given in W.P.H. 30 Jan.1903. The meeting was held on Wednesday afternoon 25 Jan.1903 in the office of the Union Steamship Company and the following were present: S.L. Lazarus (Chairman) businessman, D. Calder (Acting Warden of Suva), Hon. W. Burton (Manager, Bank of New Zealand), J. H. Garrick, H. Shaw, H. M. Scott, E. A. Benjamin, T. Fitzgerald, G. L. Griffiths, A. Barker, F. J. Barnett, J. McConnell, and R. Morel (of Navua).
was suitable for the Fijians and Indians and Europeans should not interfere in the governance of these two races, who should remain under the direct control of the colonial regime. Self-government was the birthright of Europeans only, while the coloured races needed an alien white master. A petition was quickly drawn up and submitted to the Governor with signatures from Suva while another, identical in composition, was circulated around the Colony.

The petitioners sought the franchise for male adults born or naturalized British subjects, and not Indians, Fijians or other Pacific Islanders. Electors should be able to read and write rudimentary English and must have lived in the Colony for two years and possess a property qualification, either freehold or leasehold, of £20 per annum, or an income of £120 p.a. derived from any profession, trade, business or calling. An intending candidate had to have further qualifications of having property, freehold of the annual value of £500 or actual value of £500 or leasehold valued at £100 p.a. or a yearly income of £200. The colonists asked for the right to elect 12 members to the Legislative Council and stipulated that if only 9 seats were granted then the Colony shall be divided into seven electorates. Further, they suggested that the elected members of the Legislative Council should choose two from their midst to sit on the Executive Council; a proposition rejected by both Jackson and the Secretary of State.9

What the colonists were seeking was tantamount to representative institutions akin to those prevailing in the white dominions of Australasia. This was more than even Jackson could concede, although, unlike his predecessor O'Brien or W.L. Allardyce, he was prepared to recommend the introduction of the elective principle.10 O'Brien had earlier dismissed the European

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9 Jackson to C.O.39, 2h Apr. 1903; C.O.83/76. C.O. to Jackson 51, 8 July 1903. F.R.G. 1905:105-109. No C.O.83 series reference number is cited after despatches consulted in the National Archives of Fiji.

10 Allardyce, as Officer Administering Government in the interlude between O'Brien's departure and Jackson's arrival, had advised the Colonial Office against any constitutional change. Allardyce to C.O.16, 1 Mar. 1902.
population generally as a non-productive component and hence undeserving of the franchise. He wrote that under the existing circumstances if the vote were to be extended on the basis of contribution towards productivity it would mean 20 Fijian members in the Legislative Council representing the largest landowners in the country, 12 seats for the sugar companies, 2 for private planters, 1 for Suva and Levuka and 1 for free Indians, Polynesians and half-castes. Not only was such a scheme impractical it displayed a total disregard and sympathy for European aspirations.

But, although the franchise question was fraught with difficulties, Jackson was prepared to compromise. First, there was an important minority among the settlers, led by the Senior Unofficial (nominated) Member of the Legislative Council and including some of the largest commercial interests, which preferred the status quo. While this element could not be ignored because of their economic position, nor could the wishes of over three hundred petitioners be ignored for the sake of a very small minority, no matter how important otherwise. The settlers had to be given some representation but it was common knowledge that local Europeans especially the small planters, both in sugar and copra, were openly hostile towards the sugar companies which they frequently labelled as foreign and monopolistic and to whose whims, it was claimed, the government succumbed to the detriment of local interests. Obviously reconciliation was essential.

One solution was to give representation to the sugar companies. The Director of the C.S.R. Company, Edward Knox, was the obvious person to approach and correspondence with him begun by O'Brien was renewed by Jackson. In the beginning Knox had stated that though the existing constitution was not an ideal one, satisfactory modification could be made 'provided the unofficial members of the Council were elected by the landowners and ratepayers instead of being nominated by the Governor, and such members had the right to veto any expenditure - at all events pending reference to the Colonial Office.' O'Brien found the recommendation wholly unacceptable. Knox tried to convince Jackson later of the value of

11 O'Brien to C.O.74, 22 Sept.1900; C.O.83/71.
12 Jackson to C.O.74, 22 June 1903.
the second part of his suggestion but he too saw difficulties in it.\footnote{14} The distance between London and Fiji was a problem but the cable system could overcome this difficulty. Further the Governor could be given powers to override the veto if he felt that the delay caused by it could be detrimental to public interest. However, Jackson was hopeful that elected members would be less likely to resort to such obstructionist tactics than the existing nominated ones; later behaviour in Council after 1905 did not prove Jackson correct. But there was the risk that if elected members could temporarily oppose the money veto, they could use their power to question personal emoluments of unpopular officials. The whole issue was hedged with danger and the question of supremacy in money matters of the representatives of the people was not settled in Britain itself till 1911.

The suggestion that the directors of the two companies, C.S.R. and the Fiji Sugar Company, jointly elect a representative was unacceptable to Knox because a person so chosen might be regarded as a delegate rather than a representative of the companies, thereby diminishing his influence.\footnote{15} Also the allocation of a separate seat for the sugar industry could give rise to the contention that the interests of the Colony and that of the sugar industry were not interdependent, that the former were being subordinated to the latter. Knox's counter suggestion was that the seat be filled either by nomination of the Governor or vote of the Council, on the understanding that such a member be able to speak with authority about the workings of sugar-mills and large plantations.\footnote{16} Although Jackson did not agree with Knox's reasons for rejecting his method, he decided not to force the issue. But he found Knox's alternative impracticable because nomination by the Governor of a representative for the sugar industry would rekindle earlier objections to this system and secondly it was most unlikely that the newly-elected members would agree to make such a selection. To

\footnote{14} Jackson to C.O.Conf. 28 Jan. 1903; C.O.83/76.


\footnote{16} Jackson to C.O.116, 7 Oct. 1903.
ensure that the sugar companies were not altogether left out Jackson decided to give the franchise to those C.S.R. Company employees who earned £120 p.a. or more. This would enable sugar interests to influence the election of at least one of the three representatives allocated to those engaged in agriculture. This was a last resort measure. Earlier Jackson had temporarily thought of this line of action along with an annual income qualification of £150. Knox himself had been dubious of its value; most of his officers in Fiji were Australians who, as a group, resented (and thus ignored) the advice of their employer in such matters. And Jackson then saw no reason for extending the vote to the Company's staff of whom he wrote:

They have no stake in the Colony, pay no rates or taxes, since they live in quarters on the Companies' Estates, and if they give up their employment here they would quit these islands, and it seems better to limit the voters to those who have a real interest in the colony. 18

The Governor's description of this class as birds-of-passage was in harmony with the feelings of local white settlers on the subject. Later there were expressions of resentment when the new constitution was published and it was discovered that this element had been enfranchised while other permanent citizens had not. 19

Early in the discussions with the Colonial Office on the franchise issue Jackson had had to discount the tentative recommendation of the former on the method of bestowing representation. The Colonial Office had suggested the possibility of giving seats in the Legislative Council to the Wardens of Suva and Levuka. The Executive Council, comprised wholly of officials, had no objection to it and had even gone to the extent of recommending to the Governor that the quality of advice likely to be had from an elected unofficial element would probably not be as good as that obtained from the currently nominated members. 20 They were also wary of difficulties regarding representation of Europeans outside Suva and

17 Jackson to C.O.Conf. 28 Jan. 1903; C.O.83/76.
18 ibid.
19 W.P.H. 22 Nov. 1904.
20 Jackson to C.O.Conf. 28 Jan. 1903.
Levuka as well as of native interests obtaining a voice in the Council. At the same time they advised the Governor that all unofficials ought to be elected because if some were elected and some nominated the public would not be satisfied and Government would be open to incessant charges of attempting to pack the Council.\(^{21}\) The seven unofficial members of the existing Council, all represented commercial interests: Murray, the Managing Director of the Fiji Sugar Company; Burton, Manager of the Bank of New Zealand; Gemmell-Smith local C.S.R.Company Manager; all were unanimous in their view that the inclusion of the warden would satisfy nobody, and that the principle of election was the only ultimate answer.

There were other difficulties as well. The geography of the archipelago, and the sparse distribution of the small European population, except for a large concentration in Suva, caused consternation. The magnitude of the problem depended upon the number of members to be elected. Originally Jackson thought there might be eight or nine; and three could come from Suva and Levuka, representing the professional and business classes, two (or three) representing the planters, one representing foreign capital invested in the sugar factories and two Fijians. The end result was six members for the European community and two for the natives. Of the six elected European seats, two were allocated to Suva and one to Levuka, and three went to planter interests scattered throughout the colony.

The foresight of Jackson gave the Fijians two seats in the Legislative Council even though the men chosen were essentially the representatives of a traditional elite. But other non-Europeans were less lucky including 22,790 Indians who were British subjects no less than any of the other residents.\(^{22}\) And only 9,776 of these Indians were indentured labourers still serving their contracts.\(^{23}\) Jackson had written and the Secretary of State

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23 F.R.G.1905:646.
acquiesced without comment:

I do not think it necessary to provide representation for the Indian and Polynesian element, which has shown itself very open to corruption at the municipal elections, and whose interests I would safeguard by appointing the Agent-General an official Member of Council. 24

At that stage there was some dissatisfaction with the conduct of municipal elections and the Towns Ordinance was under consideration 'with a view to securing, among other things, greater purity in the elections, which will in the future be under supervision of the Government'. 25 But the exact nature of the corruption remained vague. Judging from what was said some years later in order to exclude Indians from the municipal roll, it involved the purchase of votes by various inducements. Jackson's judgement in the matter can hardly be described as impartial, rather in an attempt to placate European opinion it seems that he fell prey to its prejudices.

The new Constitution was published on 10 October 1904, the day of arrival of Jackson's successor, Sir Everard im Thurn, though the settlers had been told of the number of their elected representatives earlier through the local press. 26 Their reception of this news, however, was not very favourable because what was given fell short of expectations. 27

To understand settler criticisms the qualifications for electors and candidates ought to be stated. An elector had to be the son of parents of European descent; a British subject by birth or naturalization, 21 years of age, resident in Fiji for twelve consecutive months, and possessed of leasehold or freehold or both in Fiji worth £20 p.a. or an annual income of not less than £120. For those who wished to qualify to be elected as planters' representatives the following was stated:

Three members by persons duly qualified as electors as herein before provided, who are engaged, either on their own behalf or in the employ of other persons, in the cultivation of land or the management of farms within the Colony of not less than 100 acres in extent, or in the production and manufacture of sugar, provided that the annual salary or wages derived from such employment be not less than £120.

25 Jackson to C.O.Conf. 28 Jan. 1903; C.O.83/76.
26 W.P.H. 14 Aug. 1903.
This proviso had the effect of keeping without the franchise those small planters who had properties of less than 100 acres. The exact number excluded is difficult to determine; according to the 1906 population estimate there were 1,237 European adult males in the colony, of these 842 lived outside the capital but only 319 in all qualified for the planters' roll.\(^2^8\) All those who lived outside Suva and Levuka and were not engaged in agriculture, European shopkeepers, tradesmen, ministers of religion and other residents not involved with the cultivation of land, were also without the franchise. What made it more galling was that transients employed by the sugar companies could exercise some influence by their vote in the control of the affairs of a country that was not their home but only a source of income while permanent citizens, some descended from pioneers who made Fiji British, remained deprived of their basic right of citizenship. There was dismay and anxiety that, out of an electoral roll of 350 to 400 in the country districts, as many as 250 might be sugar people thus able to dominate the poll to the detriment of other local interests.\(^2^9\) Everard im Thurn enquired from the Colonial Office whether it was intended to withhold the franchise from all missionaries, storekeepers, merchants and professional men and others outside Suva and Levuka and who earned not less than £120 annually but did not have farms of not less than 100 acres or were not connected with sugar; Whitehall replied in the affirmative.\(^3^0\) The electoral roll could have been even further reduced had not the Governor given a very liberal interpretation to the phrase 'usual place of business' and let it imply place of residence as well.\(^3^1\) Had he not done so then business men such as bankers and merchants, whose offices were situated in the townships of Suva and Levuka but whose homes lay beyond the municipal boundaries, would have been excluded as well. If some stood rejected others received more than one vote because merchants and directors of firms resident in the new and old capitals of Fiji invariably had interests in plantations of some kind.

30 Im Thurn to C.O.114, 14 Nov. 1905. W.P.H. 22 Nov. 1904.
31 Im Thurn to C.O.114, 14 Nov. 1905.
Originally it had been intended in the Letters Patent to give the vote to only those residents of these two towns 'other than persons engaged in the cultivation of the land' but Governor Jackson had drawn the Colonial Office's attentions to the implications of such a requirement and the words were deleted.\(^\text{32}\)

Though not all the European settlers were happy with the new constitution which had introduced the elective principle, most regarded it as an improvement on the old whereby the Governor nominated the unofficials. The old system, they felt, subordinated their interests and aspirations to the will of an autocrat. But the new constitution limited the franchise to Europeans only; barely 2,440 Europeans were permitted to elect 6 members; from 92,000 native Fijians a tiny elite (of less than one hundred) could forward the names of not more than 6 of their class and from these the Governor would nominate two as their representatives, from 22,000 Indian British subjects there were to be none. This was an unbalanced constitution and its legacy was both European over-representation and the acknowledgement, albeit tacit, of the supremacy of the European in the political arena of the Colony. The corollary proved to be European resentment when this dominant role was questioned and threatened by others seeking parity. Its imbalance and the total neglect of the Indian sowed seeds of future strife. In the case of the Fijians the gentlemanly method of selection possibly avoided discord among chiefs and commoners which might have resulted if that society had been subjected to an election campaign. But the elective principle and the likelihood of challenge from rivals trying to woo the support of the people would have certainly aroused many a traditional leader out of apathy and given him incentive for greater concern for his people. Equally the lax and indifferent would have become casualties; swept aside to be replaced by others, some of common stock. The fate of the Fijian people might have been different but certainly for the better. They had before Cession known how to choose between men, aided by the rule of the club certainly but this did not negate their ability to differentiate between what was beneficial and what was harmful, they knew this even before the

missionaries arrived with their wares. After thirty years of British rule the elective principle could have been extended to them by giving them a greater voice in the affairs of their own country; they could have become participants and equal partners in government instead of onlookers to the squabbles between cautious officials and ambitious colonists. In 1904 an opportunity for early training was missed. There is, of course, the argument that had the British permitted the Fijians to choose their representatives by election, they would have had to grapple with the problems of disappointed chiefs rejected by their people. This could have led to the erosion of chiefly status. But such was contrary to the British policy - rigidly pursued in Fiji - of the preservation of the chiefly caste and of ruling through them.

Whatever their criticism of the new constitution the European settlers decided to make full use of the new opportunity to choose their new representatives. When nominations closed Levuka had only one candidate, Captain David Robbie, a fifty-six year old former sailor now turned merchant; he was thus declared elected. But elsewhere competition was keen; in Suva there were nine aspirants for the two seats; and seven offered themselves for the three positions of planters' representatives. None of the men seeking election to the colony's first elected legislature had been born in the colony, although most had been some years in the country and a few had come in those hectic days before Cession. The type of franchise granted had been communal. It was confined to Europeans who alone could participate in the elections both as voters and candidates.33


* Successful Candidates.
THE constitution was, obviously, the first issue for the candidates to cut their teeth on. Much was made of the fact that certain Anglo-Saxons had been deprived of their birthright by the restricted nature of the franchise. Because those in the country had specifically been omitted those standing in the planters' electorate were especially indignant. Accusations were made that Suva had been favoured over the more important rural sector. On the other hand men like Marks thought the present system with its limitations was one to test them; and if they proved capable, then more liberal reforms would result.

All were combined in opposition to the cadet system, as it was known. They were all in favour of recruiting local European youths for the civil service instead of importing them from England on salaries beyond their ability. Allied to this question was the advocacy for greater educational facilities for European children. It was generally thought that the missions, which were considered to have done an excellent job, should be given government assistance. Coubrough, for instance, told his audience that every centre of population should have an elementary school at government expense and that there ought to be an institution for higher learning in Suva to train local youths for jobs in the civil service. Unlike the others, Marks favoured the extension of education to blacks as well as whites; some doubted whether, once educated, the Indian would be an agriculturist.


35 J.B. Turner argued that local youths had as much intelligence as those from Britain. Besides it cost the Colony £10 in passage money plus £200 p.a. in salary for these whereas a local boy received only £50 p.a. W.P.H. 21 Mar. 1905.


37 Marks' retort was: 'You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear!' He claimed to have studied the history of the Indian race and was certain that the Indian who came as a labourer must remain as one. This was despite the remarks of his questioner, one Smith, that 'these Indian children are from a higher and more advanced race than many of the whisky swilling white one'. W.P.H. 21 Mar. 1905.
The two most vital issues were land and labour. Naturally the planters' candidates were most vocal on these but they did not have a monopoly, nor necessarily were their arguments best for the purpose. Every aspirant dwelt at length on these, and each clamoured for greater availability of both but in certain details there were differences, over land particularly.

At Cession all alienation of Fijian land had been prohibited. Thereafter it became the cry of every settler, whether merchant or planter, that the native had too much land, and that the surplus should be put on the open market for sale. While Governors O'Brien and Jackson agreed with the first part, and Im Thurn wholly with the settler argument, by the time of the election Gordon's land policy remained substantially unaltered. All possible development was equated with land and the prevailing policy was castigated as responsible for the lack of progress. The general European belief was that Gordon had falsely interpreted both the Deed of Cession and Fijian customary land tenure in returning all land to the natives when they surrendered their country to the British sovereign. They argued that they were not seeking to deprive the Fijian of the land, he could have as much as he wanted but what was beyond his own needs he must not let lie waste and deprive others of its use. A corollary to this line of thought was that development was only possible through the influx of European settlers into the islands but these could not and would not come unless a plentiful supply of freehold land was easily procurable. Again Henry Marks in his election address summed up the settler case. The Fijians were a dying race, this had been the predicament of all native races that had come into contact with the Europeans and the continuing decline

38 One candidate, Dr. Fox disagreed with his compatriots. He contended that at Cession Fijians did not surrender the ownership of their land but gave supreme mataqali interest in it to the Queen. This was different from ownership but it nonetheless gave the Colonial Government power to have immense influence over its use and the Fijians would not disregard a governor's advice on the subject. His argument he claimed was based on information given to him by the man who had interpreted the English words of the Deed of Cession to the Fijians.


of the Fijians despite every care of medical men and missionaries meant they too were doomed. So a Native Lands Department should be established distinct from the Native Office and it should assume control over all surplus lands and rent it out at rates low enough to enable applicants to cultivate it profitably. Money from rents would be returned to the Fijians. A land tax on all lands including those of natives should be imposed in order to pay for improvement of communication necessary for opening up land. But not all were agreed on this aspect, especially those standing in the planters' constituency. McConnell favoured a land tax ranging from 3d to 1/- per acre.\textsuperscript{40} Coubrough thought it would be impracticable; very large sums would have to be expended to survey all the waste lands before any tax could be levied, and it would be years before the capital spent would be returned and the venture become profitable.\textsuperscript{41} Instead a local tax could be collected from proprietors for the upkeep of roads which passed through surveyed lands. The existing arrangement was not business-like because the Government was not even charging the Fijians 5\% as ordinary commission for services rendered to them as regards their land. Moreover the colony was in debt and it was the moral obligation of the Fijian to help liquidate it; consequently he ought to part with his land to help with the repayment.

With land went the question of labour, for land without labour was unworkable and labour without land was superfluous. Labour had to be plentiful and cheap and the obvious source was India. But certain reservations were aired about Indians. There were fears that if the Indians moved into the field of commerce, they would squeeze out the European shopkeepers. Coubrough for instance insisted that they must find 'means of confining the wily coolie to the status of agricultural labourer and not allow him to compete in any way with the mercantile community'.\textsuperscript{42} Indians were wanted but only as labourers.\textsuperscript{43}

These were the major issues and every candidate had something to offer here. But they did not all make the same impact on the voters,

\textsuperscript{40} W.P.H. 21 Mar. 1905.
\textsuperscript{41} W.P.H. 28 Mar. 1905.
\textsuperscript{42} W.P.H. 28 Mar. 1905.
\textsuperscript{43} W.P.H. 21 Mar. 1905.
some had difficulty in formulating policies, judging from their superficial comments. It proved easier to criticize the government for its shortcomings than to provide positive alternatives. Some, however, managed the task well, Marks best of all. His policy speech was lengthy, touched on all the issues and gave the impression of being conversant with all it handled. For instance, on issues involving finance, such as grant-in-aid, tariff, sugar monopoly, his business acumen enabled him to provide detailed and specific suggestions.

A recurring theme in settler politics since Cession had been the condemnation of the native policy established by Gordon and consolidated assiduously by his successors. European opinion regarded it as a failure, which kept the Fijians in bondage to their chiefs and customs and retarded their progress. The native taxation scheme more than all else was repugnant for it involved the payment of taxes in kind and, according to European contention, thwarted the Fijian from acquiring that all-important knowledge about the value of money. If he learnt this, along with the idea that the money he earned was his own and his chiefs had no prior claims to it, then he would be prepared to work. This argument emphasized that the Fijian was disadvantaged, hence the desire for change, but it was only ostensibly altruistic, being really self-interested designed to obtain a cheap and ready supply of Fijian labour, the very thing the government measure was aimed to restrict.

In Suva, there was much preoccupation with an issue which drew little attention elsewhere. This concerned the early closing of business houses; something likely to affect the working man. Lazarus mentioned how he had made great efforts five years before to obtain early closing and a half-holiday and Saturday night closing but the opposition of two firms robbed the working man of this benefit. His strong views on this subject possibly cost him valuable support and led to his defeat. Those from the commercial sector, such as Henry Marks, were of the opinion that while they were happy with business hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for week-days and 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, if only the white shopkeepers observed this restriction it would be unfair because Indians and Chinese carried on from daylight to midnight. Unless all aliens were also compelled to close by dark the idea was impracticable.

These then were the subjects that concerned European voters. They were issues that displayed a communal bias. Everything seemed to be viewed from European eyes in terms of European grievances and aspirations. The good of the European was equated with the good of the colony. Where reference was made to the other races, it was not for the sake of these communities themselves but vis-à-vis their role in the progress and prosperity of the European community. For instance, the native policy was a failure, not because the Fijians may have found it so, but because the settlers found it contrary to their plans. Indian labour was essential, but no discussion occurred about the conditions under which the Indians might or might not wish to work. It was assumed that the terms offered, namely engagement through the indenture system, were satisfactory. Whether Indian and Chinese entry into commerce might create greater competition and lead to low prices for the consumer was irrelevant. The essential point was to reserve this field for Europeans only. Whether an influx of these two races might be undesirable for the ultimate good of the Fijian people was ignored. What was important was that the settlers needed cheap labour which if unavailable locally, had to be procured from abroad. Thus the settlers would profit and European gain was the Colony's gain, it was unreasonable to assume anything different.

Land and labour were vital to the settlers hence these loomed large in the politicking. The constitution was not as important on this occasion except in so far as certain Europeans in the country had not been enfranchised. But it did not matter that over 20,000 British subjects who were Indians were given no franchise at all. They were not part of the European community and championing their cause would not have won any votes, in fact, would have frightened away support. All the adverse features of communal elections were evident: in 1905 with the franchise restricted to Europeans, it was they alone who had to be convinced and only their desires which had to be catered to. The longer the franchise was thus restricted, the longer the tendency to humour this exclusive element prevailed. On the colony-wide level the result was a polarization of interests, and the emergence of communal hostility was aggravated with each election of this type.
THE triumphant at the communal election entered the Legislative Council as its first elected members to that body. In the course of his opening address the Governor, Sir Everard im Thurn welcomed them thus:

The value of the unofficial element consists in the fact that its representatives are often in a good position both to discern and propose the subjects most urgently needing the consideration of the Council, and to advise as to the best methods of dealing with these subjects; and this value of the unofficial element is naturally greater when it is in the hands of the elected rather than nominated members. 45

For the settlers watching from the outside the beginning may have promised greater things. For at the very first session of the elected council a Bill was introduced to sanction for the first time since 1879 the alienation of native land by sale or lease provided the transaction had the blessing of the Governor-in-Council. 46 The ordinance (VI of 1905) was designed to benefit all, settler and native alike, and to add to the prosperity of the Colony. Though the elected members wholeheartedly favoured the measure, it had been initiated not by them but the Governor himself. During the course of the debate they did not cavil with the basic principles though men like Turner wanted to go further and allow for the resumption by the Crown of all the lands of an extinct mataqali rather than permit it to be distributed to a related mataqali. He also wished, again unsuccessfully, to have all transactions concerning surplus lands to be between Government and the individual without contact with the natives. If the settlers appeared to have won the battle over Fijian lands, they certainly had not won the war by the passage of the new ordinance. Sir Arthur Gordon, now Lord Stanmore, was reluctant to accept this radical change which to him undermined the foundation of his policy in Fiji. His thunder in the House of Lords was largely responsible for the repeal of im Thurn's land legislation which lasted three years and saw the alienation of 104,142 acres of native land. 47 Gordon's anger had a sound basis, justified for example by the Navuso sale where the Fijians were permitted to sell outright a block of 800 acres for £1,500 when they were receiving

45 F.T. 13 May 1905.
46 ibid.
47 Ward 1965:117.
an annual rental of £15 from it and the lease still had seven years to run. One authority thought this land worth £1,000 to £5,000. It is very difficult to exonerate the Governor's handling of the whole affair; to begin with he acted on advice that was questionable and came from a not wholly disinterested party. The money from the sale was squandered and even had it been invested it would not have produced a return of £15 p.a. Had such incidences become typical there would have been severe repercussions. For the Fijian, land was his life-giving force and none other than Sir John Bates Thurston had warned earlier that the loss of this asset would arouse a catastrophic reaction from the former. Only the settlers in their avarice refused to pay heed to this sound admonition. It was fortunate for Fiji that Lord Crewe preferred Lord Stanmore's pronouncements to im Thumn's pressures. One is inclined to think that im Thumn's attempted land policy was unnecessary. It in no way substantially helped the Fijian. It did not drastically improve his position socially or economically, in fact threatened to transform him from a landowner to a landless peasant. While im Thumn was right in assuming that native policy and native land were 'so closely and inextricably woven as to be almost inseparable', he erred in his analysis of the nature of this relationship.

There was indeed a need to reappraise the overall goals of native policy formulated in 1874-75 which by 1905 was characterized by stagnation rather than the originally intended flexibility and adaptation to changing situations with the passage of time. The Europeans, in fact had exaggerated the demand for land: in the twelve months ending 31 January 1906, 15,384 acres of native land had been leased, 18,200 were taken over by the government on a sort of perpetual lease and only 2,194 acres sold to non-natives. What was sorely needed was not the sale of native lands but a policy which concentrated on showing the Fijian people how to utilize their lands for their own advancement. Here im Thumn was found wanting. When he established the Agriculture Department,

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49 W.F.H. 12 June 1906.
50 im Thumn to C.O.131, 26 Oct. 1906; C.O.83/83. C.O.Minutes in Des Voeux to C.O.Private 23 Jan. 1907; C.O.63/86. The advice had come from the management in Fiji of the C.S.R.Company which had had a lease on the land.
52 F.T. 12 May 1906.
for which he was much praised, it was orientated to cater for the needs of the European cultivators rather than for elevating the owners of the land.

If the new land policy was a victory, it was a temporary one, yet it enabled the elected members to show the voters that they had fulfilled, in so far as was permitted them, a vital promise they had made at the hustings. On the question of the other related issue labour, there was no achievement. There was an attempt by the Government to secure from Queensland about 3,000 'Polynesians' which a newly-federated 'white Australia' had decided to expel because of its immigration policy but this was fraught with difficulties and Fiji received only 427 labourers from this source.53

On the question of the constitution it was pointed out that no major changes would be considered until the present system had been given a fair trial, but before the end of council the franchise had been extended to those who had been omitted in 1901. The efforts of S.L.Lazarus who won a by-election late in 1905 on the resignation of Murray were particularly persistent on this count.

But there were set-backs too. Despite unanimous opposition from the elected members the Indian Hemp Prohibition Ordinance and the Towns Amendment Ordinance of 1905, which permitted increases in rates, were passed into law. Some indignation resulted because the protests of the elected members were ignored. They were of the opinion that as they represented the people their united voice should be given due consideration. In the case of the first ordinance, Government argued that Marks was opposed to the bill because he was financially involved with the chemist who imported hemp into the country and the bill threatened his pocket.54 It was taken as an example of European solidarity in matters that affected them. At the Colonial Office such behaviour raised doubts as to the suitability of giving even limited franchise to those who pursued such parochial goals so vigorously.55 Again it might be repeated that this communalism reflected the type of franchise imposed by the British

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54 In Thurn to C.O.140, 1 Nov. 1905; im Thurn to C.O.Conf. 1 Nov. 1905; C.O.83/81.
55 C.O.Minutes im Thurn to C.O.136, 3 Nov. 1906; C.O.83/83.
Government. In the case of the hemp prohibition legislation the settlers argued that the ordinance interfered with an Indian customary practice and would endanger the supply of labourers who would not wish to migrate to a country that forbade such a luxury.\textsuperscript{56} Once more the problem was viewed from the point of European needs.

Though they represented the one community the six elected members did not unite on all issues. There was already the division into town (Suva and Levuka) and country (planters') electorates but too much must not be made of this because many interests overlapped. McRae as a bank manager whose institution loaned money to planters could not divorce himself from issues which affected them. Marks a merchant in Suva was also a landowner with money invested in plantations. He could not play Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde within his own financial empire. Nor could Lazarus, Suva businessmen but a planters' representative, devote himself solely to the demands of his constituents at the risk of his own pocket. After all, they were not being paid to be in politics; for their involvement in the Council they received no remuneration, they had to ensure that the master who fed them was not neglected for the sake of those whom they claimed to serve altruistically. Perhaps Turner and Coubrough could be more single-minded. At least they acted thus on the question of the ordinance introduced by Marks for the early closing of shops and to regulate the hours of employment.\textsuperscript{57} Within the community itself there was some difference over the issue but Marks assumed that it would disappear once all, including large Chinese and Indian shops, were made to abide by the provisions of the law. Though not disagreeing with the bill itself, both Turner and Coubrough unsuccessfully sought its postponement till the October session but Marks refused to withdraw it. These two sought the delay because European shops in the country were particularly liable to suffer from competition from little Chinese and Indian shops which were springing up around the countryside and were controlled by an individual living by himself on the premises (as in the case of the Chinese) or were run as a small family venture as by Indians.

The most controversial issue that divided the elected members was

\textsuperscript{56} F.T. 18 Oct. 1905.

\textsuperscript{57} F.T. 16 May 1906.
the new customs tariff bill which in 1908 was to become a major election issue. Here Marks and McRae stood aligned with the officials and against their colleagues for they had served as members on the Customs Commission of 1907.58

The Commissioners set out to reduce the duties on such articles as seemed to them unduly heavy or to press excessively on any portion of the community, and to add to the free list those items which it appeared expedient to exempt from duty.59 Therefore the existing tariff on the following was reduced: boots and shoes; boxes and trunks; drapery; fencing wire; hats and caps; and kerosene. In order to remove the ensuing deficit in the revenue duties were imposed to fall on those members of the community benefitting most by the reductions taking into account their ability to pay and achieving a fair distribution of the tax over the whole population. Most of the increased duties fell on foodstuffs.60

The Commissioners were all Europeans, not even a Fijian chief was included in their number, let alone a representative from the, at this stage leaderless, Indian community, and their misconceptions and bias were obvious:

Your Commissioners would observe that Indians and Fijians benefit to the greatest extent by the reductions which they propose, especially in regards to boots and shoes, drapery, hats and caps, and kerosene; that there is no obvious reason why their taxes should be reduced, especially bearing in mind that, in proportion to their means, the East Indians contribute little at present to the general revenue, while the circumstances of the Fijians are very affluent now in comparison with their condition when the existing tariff was framed.

Not many Fijians wore caps and hats or boots and shoes. The same

58 The members were A.Ehrhardt, Acting Chief Justice, as Chairman and the others were W.Sutherland, Ross, Coates, Marks, McRae, A.B.Joske, P.A.Morris, the last two being local merchants. The report was published as C.P.1u/1908.

59 C.P.1u/1908.

60 The Commissioners explained: 'Your Commissioners have not been unmindful of the reasons generally advanced against taxation of these articles nor of the incidence of the fresh impositions. But in the peculiar circumstances of Fiji, where the industries are practically in the hands of a small proportion of the residents, it is, in our opinion, essential to tax these articles if a fair distribution of taxation is to be realized.' C.P.1u/1908.
perhaps only very slightly to a lesser degree, could be said of Indians. No doubt the reduction on kerosene from 9d to 4d per gallon would have been a boon and it still was when the Governor's suggestion was adopted by the Legislative Council to make the new price not 4d but 6d per gallon. Of drapery, the gain was not restricted to these two communities. The remarks of the Commissioners illustrated their ignorance of the two communities which with urban living had little contact. They claimed that their own community was the one most heavily penalised but it could sustain 'the small increase proposed' because of reductions elsewhere and of the general prosperity of the Colony at the time.

Marks and McRae were to argue in similar vein in the Legislative Council. Marks saw no reason why the working man should escape such taxation for there was no intention to give him 'a free breakfast-table'. Not the housewife but the bakers, shopkeepers and merchants were affected by the duty in flour. He took the view that items such as butter, ghee, rice, chhall and grain should be taxed because those could easily be produced locally and ought not to be imported. Even biscuits could be manufactured locally. None would quarrel with this contention, in fact, had Marks' advice been put into practice the country would have benefitted tremendously. But those affected by the tariff increases were not the ones able to rectify the position by the means proposed. For example, the C.S.R. Company would not have permitted its tenants to grow rice on its lands; it had the monopoly of transport on Viti Levu and could refuse to freight certain commodities.

Turner was to argue that it was the working man who was most affected and this included Fijians and Indians. Lazarus maintained that the duties on foodstuffs fell on an already overtaxed category and added to the cost of living. As to the reference to prosperity in the Colony, this was not widespread but confined to 'shareholders

61 L.C. Debates First Session 1907:44-57.
62 ibid:49.
63 ibid:47.
64 ibid:46.
of large companies and estates, business firms, and proprietors of large agricultural and pastoral holding and some small ones'.

Coubrough pointed out that the Indian labourers' wage was a fixed one and if the price of his food rose then he would be affected by it. The impression that the Europeans were championing Indians and Fijians in this instance is false. The tariff increases affected Europeans no less and there was no conflict of interest between communities. Secondly if labourers were affected then the effects would be passed on to the Europeans: there would be a possible decline in their availability as well as pressure to increase their wages.

Whatever their motives there were strong protests from these members. And they did not fall completely on deaf ears. The Governor during the debate commended the work of the commissioners and accepting their basic principles but considered modification necessary. Kerosene was not to decrease from 9d to 4d but to 6d per gallon. Im Thum suggested drapery be charged 15% duty instead of 12%. These two alterations would increase revenue and permit corresponding reductions elsewhere. He proposed to keep the duty on flour but to forego recommended charges on bacon and hams, biscuits, butter and ghee, and rice. Nor did he overlook a suggestion by Turner earlier to tax spirits which the Commissioners, because of a lack of unanimity among them, had refrained from doing. These were accepted though Turner wished for greater duty on spirits and for biscuits to be put on the duty-free list.

Though it was not expected that the elected members would fulfil all their election promises, they had not done too badly. They appeared to have obtained all they wished to regarding land and the constitution. On labour their position was no worse than it had been. The only major difficulty had been the customs tariff and, embarrassingly for them, this came at the end of their term when they must shortly face their electors whose pockets had been hit. How well they had performed would in the end be judged by their success or failure in the elections of 1908.

65 ibid.
66 ibid:18.
67 ibid:54-56.
THE POLITICS OF CONSOLIDATION

THE elections of 1908 aroused no less interest than those of 1905. For the electors they were an opportunity to pronounce judgement on their first elected representatives. The issues were in general no different from those of 1905; land, labour, economic development, fear of the influx of the Chinese into Fiji, and tariff. The politicians were a mixture of old and new faces. And the new fared better than the old. There was a reaction against the old; five sought re-election but only one proved successful. In Suva, Marks finished at the bottom of the poll. He was held responsible for the increase in customs tariff; he was aware of this as he went to great lengths during his campaign to justify what had been done. Turner was rejected by the planters who preferred to choose three of their own kind rather than make room for even one Suva-based politician of independent means. These were the failures; but both Marks and Turner were victorious at later elections and the former, especially, was to enjoy a long membership of the Legislative Council. Of the successful in 1908, two were particularly important; Henry Milne Scott from Suva and John Maynard Hedstrom from Levuka. These two were the first Fiji-born Europeans to enter the Legislative Council. Both were able and already successful young men, one a lawyer, the other director of one of the largest commercial houses in the Colony. They were descendants of pioneers who had risked their all in the islands and were of that rare group who had won through adverse circumstances to prosperity. Being Fiji-born had helped Scott and Hedstrom in the

3 W.P.H. 7 Apr. 1908. Turner told his audience in Rewa that his term in Council had more than convinced him that the country districts required a man permanently resident in Suva. He was practically an idle man with no regular occupation to demand his time hence he could act as an agent of the people who required their affairs to be brought to the notice of the Government.
elections. Hedstrom had already shown his worth in Levuka as warden and politician in the town board there. And Captain Robbie was no match for him; their campaign speeches indicated the gulf between the two men. Scott too at his public meeting had amply displayed his grasp of local politics by his lucid explanation of a wide range of issues which troubled his electors. The Colony's constitution was one aspect that Scott emphasized as requiring reform. Both he and Hedstrom were, from 1908 till their departure from the Legislative Council in 1936, to play a decisive and dominant role in the course of the Colony's constitutional history.

Between 1908 and approximately 1920 three issues concerned the European representatives in their quest for political reform. These were: to increase their numbers in the Legislative Council, to obtain representation on the Executive Council and to restrict the municipal franchise. European aspirations in each is discussed in considerable detail to illustrate the methods that Europeans employed to consolidate their political position. The episodes also elucidate the relationship between colonial rule and European politicians.

The year 1908 was a busy one for debates on the Constitution initiated by the elected members. This occurred despite the Governor's announcement in his message at the opening of the new Council:

I have lately closely watched the course of the elections; and though this is not the time or place to speak of most of the lessons which I have learned I may say this - that I


have satisfied myself that no further change in the Letters Patent is immediately required. 6

Dr Fox was the first to disregard the advice when he sought to amend the Letters Patent by moving that Europeans who were conversant with the Fijian language should be elected by the indigenous people as their representatives. 7 His belief was that Fijians would be better represented by Europeans than by their own people; he claimed that one of the natives was agreeable to his view. The Governor ruled that the Legislative Council had no power to alter the Letters Patent and Fox withdrew his motion. 8 He did likewise with another motion which he intended to move to seek the franchise for women. 9

It was again Henry Milne Scott who voiced the feelings of his colleagues and compatriots by moving a resolution calling for greater representation. Since between 1884 and 1893 the Legislative Council had an unofficial majority (6 nominated unofficials to 5 officials with the Governor having a deliberative and casting vote) Scott saw no reason why in 1908 the elected members should not equal in number the ex-officio ones. 10 As the Governor had acknowledged that they had grown quickly in political terms Scott saw no reason why they should not continue this progress especially if more elected members enabled them to divide the Colony into electorates which would provide better and more direct representation for country districts. He referred to other colonies such as Bermuda, Cyprus, British Guiana and Mauritius where elected representatives were in greater proportion than in Fiji and sought the same for the latter. His plea found no official support for his motion was defeated by 12 official votes to 6 elected ones. The Governor reiterated:

I do not think that, at the present time, in the present stage of the Colony's development, we could get more than six elected members who, conveniently to themselves and conveniently to public business, could serve on the Council. 11

6 L.C. Debates 1908 First Session: 2.
7 ibid: 43.
8 ibid: 44.
9 ibid. At the Second Session in October despite Thurn's earlier ruling, he sought to introduce a Bill which would give the Council power to amend the Letters Patent without having to rely on the grace of the Secretary of State; his motion was lost. ibid. Second Session: 21-22.
10 ibid: 24-25.
11 ibid: 27.
In his despatch to the Secretary of State on Scott's motion im Thurn restated his argument in more forthright language:

I honestly believe that there are not in the islands a sufficient number of suitable candidates to stand for a larger number of seats than are already allotted; and as regards the Official Members I am sure that already the seats are as many as can conveniently be filled. 12

And Whitehall accepted the advice of its representative.13 The elected members were not merely airing their own views, they had the sympathy of their constituents. Those in the country districts were particularly active. Led by James McConnell they had submitted a petition to the Secretary of State through the Governor.14 They complained that the Government was excessively preoccupied with town and commercial interests, especially those of Suva, at the expense of the outer islands, including Vanua Levu. Secondly, as a redress they sought greater political representation for those who obtained a livelihood directly from land. Therefore, they desired eight seats for the European colonists in Fiji and the division of the Colony into eight electorates for the purpose. The petitioners also felt that country areas should be represented by those who resided there and not by townsmen.

There had been no change in im Thurn's attitude towards increased European representation from that expressed the previous year, and he again advised London to refuse this demand.15 Towards the introduction of electorates he was more favourable. He had come to accept the need as early as Scott's motion of October 1908 though at the time he was still uncertain how to achieve an equitable division.16 Then he had recognized that three members for an undivided constituency scattered through the islands meant that the latter were unable to consult their electorate as frequently as possible. He was prepared to recommend that the country districts be divided into electorates but he repudiated the

12 Im Thurn to C.O.129, 18 Oct. 1908; C.0.83/88.
15 Im Thurn to C.O.207, 6 Dec. 1909; C.0.83/93.
16 Im Thurn to C.O.129, 18 Oct.1908; C.0.83/88.
view that they should be resident there because of the dearth of men of ability in the Colony, most such men were Suva-based.

Consequently a Committee was formed by the Governor to report on the subject; it recommended that the country districts be divided into three constituencies. Suva and Levuka remained as they were, and im Thurn after consideration of the Committee's reports suggested the following electorates:

1. **Eastern** comprising the Provinces of Lomaiviti (excluding Levuka), Macuata, Bua, Cakaudrove and Lau with 165 voters according to the 1910 figures;

2. **Northern** comprising the Provinces of Ra, Colo North and West, Ba and Nadroga with 141 voters; and

3. **Southern** comprising the Provinces of Rewa (excluding Suva), Nausori, Serua, Naitasiri, Colo East, Tailevu and Kadavu with 151 voters.

Also, no one could be a candidate for one of these electorates unless he had resided there for at least 12 months before election day or received a clear income of £150 p.a. from land there belonging to either his wife or himself.

With this concession the constitutional debate did not come to an end. Besides, the grant of electorates was a belated acceptance of advice given by A.A.Coubrough, a planters' representative, three years previously. Moreover the elected members were still determined to obtain an increase in their numbers.

In October 1912, once more a motion was moved, this time by Turner, calling for increased representation. He contended it was not possible for the six members to be present for every session of the

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17 Im Thurn to C.O.143, 29 June 1910. The Committee consisted of Dr.C.A.Brough (Acting Attorney-General) as Chairman, W.Sutherland (Native Commissioner), I.McOwan (Inspector General of Constabulary), M.T.Dods(Registrar-General) and L.Brown, one of the elected representatives of the planters.

18 ibid.

19 A.A.Coubrough had unsuccessfully moved a motion to this effect in the Legislative Council in October 1907. L.C.Debates Second Session 1907:23-26.
Like others, they sometimes wished to go abroad on business or to recuperate health and it was unfair to expect them to commit themselves in advance to remain in the Colony for three full years and sometimes for longer if they were re-elected. If they had eight representatives then the Government could always be certain of having at least six of them for every sitting of the Council. Governor Jackson in his recommendations had preferred at least eight and that was in 1905; now in 1912 more of the country had been opened up with more people needing representation hence two more elected members would help. Scott in support added that eight members would also give the Governor a larger number from whom to choose two for the Executive Council. The other elected members were in agreement with Turner and Scott. Also Turner made clear that he expected a corresponding increase on the official side. But he disagreed with the suggestion that substitutes might be named for absentee elected members because the replacements might not receive the approval of constituents.

Governor Sweet-Escott thought that the demand for eight elected members was a modest one. When he wrote to the Colonial Office, Sweet-Escott expressed himself in favour of Turner's motion stating that circumstances had changed since Thurn's time and there would be no difficulty in finding suitable candidates. Further, he did not think it was necessary to have a corresponding increase on the official side; the presiding officer could be given an original as well as a casting vote.

Initially the despatch received a cool reception in the Colonial Office where it was felt that Thurn's dictum was still valid, that is, Fiji had a small European population of indifferent quality and it could not be easy to find sufficient suitable aspirants. Yet when the despatch in reply was written the Secretary of State was willing to consider the Governor's proposals with certain provisos: first, that official membership be also increased by two; second, that the Legislative Council recommend the demarcation of electorates and third, as an alternative the elected members might choose substitutes to deputize for anyone among them.

20 L.C.Debate 2h Oct. 1912 encl. Sweet-Escott to C.0.326, 22 Nov. 1912; C.0.83/110.
21 Sweet-Escott to C.0. 326, 22 Nov. 1912; C.0.83/110.
22 Minutes. ibid.
likely to be absent from the Colony for a long period.\textsuperscript{23}

The next step was the establishment of a Select Committee of the elected members to recommend changes in the constitution. There was some disagreement and C.W. Thomas submitted a minority report which differed in one essential detail from that presented by Turner, Scott, Hedstrom and Marks.\textsuperscript{24} Both rejected the idea of a substitute for absent members or of the need for an increase in official membership commensurate with that of the elected side. The majority offered an alternative of either 7 constituencies with 8 members or 5 with 9. Thomas in his minority report agreed with the second alternative but rejected the first which he desired modified. Where the majority allocated one seat for the Northern division (stretching from Nadi to Tavua in Viti Levu) Thomas felt that the area deserved two because of population and capital invested. He did not think that Nadroga, Colo, Serua and Nausori should comprise a separate electorate of their own, rather they could be absorbed as part of others. As a planter he wanted an increase in representation to be bestowed upon his own class in the Western and Northern Viti Levu and Vanua Levu-Taveuni areas.\textsuperscript{25} The Legislative Council of 13 June

\textsuperscript{23} Draft C.O. to Sweet-Escott 43, 5 Feb.1912; C.O.83/110.
\textsuperscript{24} Reports published as C.P.107/13.
\textsuperscript{25} The existing electorates and the various suggestions there with the number of electors in each in 1913:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing</th>
<th>Majority Report Alternative 1</th>
<th>Majority Report Alternative 2</th>
<th>C.W. Thomas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 seats Suva (253)</td>
<td>2 seats Suva (253)</td>
<td>2 seats Suva (253)</td>
<td>2 seats Suva (253)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Levuka (98)</td>
<td>1 Levuka (98)</td>
<td>1 Levuka (98)</td>
<td>1 Levuka (98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Northern (190)</td>
<td>1 Vanua Levu (82)</td>
<td>2 Northern (190)</td>
<td>1 Vanua Levu (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Southern (196)</td>
<td>1 Eastern (51)</td>
<td>2 Southern (196)</td>
<td>1 Eastern (51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Eastern (135)</td>
<td>1 Southern (154)</td>
<td>2 Eastern (135)</td>
<td>1 Southern (196)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Northern (161)</td>
<td>1 Western (71)</td>
<td>1 Northern (76)</td>
<td>1 Western (114)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>
1913 adopted the majority report by one vote which was supported by the four signatories while the two native members voted with Thomas; the official members refrained both from participation in the debate or from voting. Though the Fijian members voted with Thomas they did not voice their comments. During the debate the elected members repeated their old arguments for increased representation. Thomas in his remarks introduced the same contention when he advocated the franchise for those of European descent and the Indians. From Turner and Marks he received the reprimand that Indian interests were adequately safeguarded by the officials.

The Governor in his despatch was inclined towards Thomas' electoral divisions but was only willing to recommend the increase of one elected member with a similar addition on the official benches. The small number of electors influenced his decision and this became the reason that the Colonial Office adopted in explaining why it would grant only one more elected member. Apparently this satisfied all concerned in Fiji. So by 1914 Europeans were still the only community with the right to elect their representatives. The franchise was very much the privilege of the Europeans. They might have been satisfied with what they had gained but their will was checked from having its own way completely by the presence of an official majority which could enforce the intention of the colonial ruler. The Fijians continued to have their two chiefs chosen by the Governor on the recommendation of the Council of Chiefs. Besides they could rely on the protection of the official majority. Thus the safeguard on the Fijian position endured while the Europeans continued to increase their position of having a voice in the Legislative Council in order to influence the government in their own interests.

Yet a voice in the Legislative Council provided opportunity only for comment on policies already formulated. It was equally important to be able to help draft policy. And this necessitated representation in the Executive Council. Thus in the first session of the new

26 Sweet-Escott to C.O.303, 7 July 1913; C.O.83/115.
27 C.O. to 'Sweet-Escott 326, 30 Sept. 1913; C.O.83/115.
28 Sweet-Escott to C.O.481, 22 Nov. 1913; C.O.83/117.
Legislative Council in May 1908, Henry Scott moved a motion seeking unofficial representation in the Executive Council. Though all the elected members supported him he alone made a lengthy speech stating the reasons for his request. He argued that such representation would bring the Government into closer touch with the people. As the Executive Council was directly involved in decisions concerning the important matters in the country, unofficial advice therein was essential. Other colonies such as Mauritius and Hong Kong had unofficial members in their Executive Council hence there was no reason why Fiji ought not be have the same privilege. He concluded:

Once the elective principle has been recognized there can be no doubt that in the end Responsible Government will follow, and when the people prove to the powers that be that they are in a position to govern themselves then the Constitution will be altered. This is only a step in that direction.

When the motion was put to the vote it was defeated by 11 votes to 7; only the six European members and Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi favoured it.

Governor im Thurn opposed the motion for three reasons. First, there was no precedent of other colonies having elected members in their Executive Councils; where unofficial representation existed, the men were nominees of the Governor. Second, the Letters Patent gave the Governor power to invite unofficials from time to time, when necessary, to air their views in the Executive Council on specific subjects. Third, im Thurn contended that in the small European community of Fiji elected members were 'more or less interested in the common every-day business of the Council and have financial interests in the Colony which official members have not.' This last was amplified in the memorandum of the Attorney-General, sent by im Thurn to the Colonial Office, along with Scott's motion:

We [i.e. Fiji] are too young and too small. The Colonial asset which consists of the intelligence, public spirit and practical knowledge of our leading men could as things are

29 L.C.Debates 1908 First Session:36-42.
30 ibid:37.
31 ibid:38-41.
32 ibid:39.
at present, hardly be drawn upon for this purpose without having to have recourse to some one who is personally and intimately interested in some or all of the important matters that come before Executive Council, such as land transactions, transport, supplies etc., etc. 33

Thus the Colonial Office found itself in agreement with the Governor and was unable to oblige Scott because of 'the extreme scarcity of suitable men for such a responsible and confidential position'.

But Scott refused to admit defeat. Three years later in September 1911 he raised a similar motion and circumvented earlier objections by suggesting that selection need not be confined to elected members only, it could consider men of capability outside the Council. 35 In Sir Henry May he found a sympathetic Governor who told the Colonial Office that men 'sufficiently disinterested in local undertakings', such as managers of the Banks of New Zealand and New South Wales, could be found for the purpose. 36 There were also others, who in his opinion, despite being owners of estates or managers of local enterprises, could be relied on to refrain from giving advice where their personal interests existed. He emphasized that the advice of business men would prove invaluable and better relations between officials and non-officials would result. 37

There was some doubt in the Colonial Office as to the correctness of Sir Henry's judgement on the subject. 38 But Whitehall

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34 Minutes. ibid.
36 May to C.O.Conf. 27 Apr.1912; C.O.83/106.
37 ibid.
38 Minutes. ibid. Sir Henry May does not appear to have been over popular in Whitehall for the Secretary of State minuted on one of the Governor's despatches on municipal affairs with the remarks: 'We seem to have found not only a new broom, but an old bureaucrat in Sir H.May .... His only idea at the moment seems to be to upset or appeal against every decision he finds recorded in the files he has inherited. Festina lente is the motto for the new broom.' Minutes May to C.O.Conf. 3 Aug. 1911; C.O.83/102.
was willing to wait and consider the views of the new Governor, Bickham Sweet-Escott. It even stated that it would be better to appoint two unofficials to the Executive Council and 'both be chosen, if suitable men are available, from the elected members of the Legislative Council'.

From Sweet-Escott no objection came, rather he recommended the appointment of J.B. Turner and Henry Scott as the first unofficial members to the Executive Council. In the Colonial Office it was thought that the Governor might have chosen a business man as one of the members. Turner was seen as hostile to the C.S.R.Company, its representatives had so complained in the Colonial Office, while Scott was the Company's lawyer; thus it was interpreted that Sweet-Escott might be attempting 'to balance two antagonistic elements'.

Despite this, a telegram was sent to the Governor asking whether an equally suitable business man could be found for one of the two positions. Consequently the Governor chose Henry Marks 'the largest merchant in the Colony' in place of Scott. The grant of unofficial representation in the Executive Council was a triumph for the efforts of Henry Scott though he himself was not nominated till 1911.

In July 1911 Hedstrom and Crompton convinced Governor Sweet-Escott that one of the two unofficial members in the Executive Council should represent the country districts. The Governor felt Hedstrom was the suitable man, Crompton agreed and so did Scott and Marks, both of whom were currently in the Executive Council and one of whom was likely to be omitted in the future. In selecting Hedstrom the Governor described him as 'a man of marked ability and temperate view', possessing good sense and discretion, besides:

The firm of Messrs Morris Hedstrom Limited, of which Mr Hedstrom is Managing Director, has contributed £1,000 towards the cost of the Fiji Second Reinforcement, and I am greatly indebted to Mr Hedstrom for the support in Education matters that he has given me in the Legislative Council as a member of the Board of Education.

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39 C.O. to O.A.G.Conf. 5 July 1912; C.O.83/106.
40 Sweet-Escott to C.O.Tel. 6 Sept. 1912; C.O.83/109.
41 Minutes. ibid.
42 C.O. to Sweet-Escott Tel. 9 Sept. 1912; C.O.83/109.
43 Sweet-Escott to C.O.Tel. 10 Sept. 1912; C.O.83/109.
44 Sweet-Escott to C.O.Conf. 4 Aug. 1917; C.O.83/138.
And Marks was preferred to Scott as the second member, the reason Sweet-Escott gave in a private letter:

It would have been impossible to have passed over Marks especially after his gift of £10,000 to meet the expenses of the Native Labour Detachment, although I have not referred in my despatch to that point, contenting myself with Marks' clear seniority over Scott. 46

The omission of Scott caused a furore, initially engineered by himself; petitions of protest were submitted to the Governor to be sent to the Secretary of State calling for the appointment of Scott as a third unofficial member to the Executive Council - all to no avail.47 Two years later when Marks was replaced by Scott, the former sent in a lengthy complaint to Sweet-Escott's successor, Sir Cecil Rodwell reminding the Governor of his past unparallelled generosity towards the Colony, his continuing loyalty and stating that his being overlooked was not in the best interests of Fiji.48 Again the protest brought no change and Rodwell informed Marks that he favoured periodical change in the unofficial representation to the Executive Council. But the Governor's reason is not beyond question: Turner served only for two years, 1912 to 1914; Hedstrom after his nomination in 1918 enjoyed an uninterrupted stay till his retirement in 1936 while Scott and Marks served for long periods. The only valid excuse that might be given was that in a small colony there was a shortage of able men. Politically aware European settlers viewed the appointments to the Executive Council as an important privilege which gave spokesmen for their various interests a voice in the Colony's administration. Hence in 1923 when Hedstrom and Marks, both directors of the same commercial company, were nominated for the position there was colony-wide agitation and the other elected members registered objections in the Legislative

45 ibid.

46 Sweet-Escott to Fiddes, Private, 2 Jan. 1918; C.0.83/141.

47 Sweet-Escott to C.0.1, 2 Jan. 1918; C.0.83/141. Sweet-Escott to C.0.Conf. 17 June 1918; C.0.83/142.

48 Marks to Rodwell, 8 Sept. 1920 Encl. Rodwell to C.0.Conf. 15 Sept. 1920; C.0.83/152.
Those chosen to sit on the Executive Council took equal pride in the honour. Because it enhanced their status they were sensitive if and when someone else was preferred to them.

The last paragraph of the draft despatch advising the representation of unofficial Europeans in the Executive Council read:

I shall also be glad if Sir E.B. Sweet-Escott will furnish me with his views as to the desirability of appointing a native as a member of the Executive Council. 50

But these words were deleted from the final copy. Had the despatch included this enquiry the Governor's reply might have been interesting and the Fijians might have obtained a direct voice in what was the chief decision-making council in their country. Since this was not the case, they had no membership in this council till the nineteen forties.

In 1905 Europeans who were qualified cast their votes to select their representatives in the Legislative Council. And from 1912 the Governor was permitted to choose two of these elected members to participate in the deliberations of the Executive Council. These were gains for the settlers. But they felt that new advantages ought to be strengthened by the consolidation of existing power. Moreover in the first decade of the twentieth century they still had visions of turning Fiji into a colony where their will determined its destiny. They resented any real or seeming encroachments upon their position. It was this mode of thinking that made them wish that the municipal franchise was not eroded in any manner that might menace their monopoly. It was this that motivated their politicians on the subject. For the Legislative Council they chose their own representatives by direct elections, on the Executive Council they alone had unofficial representatives. In the municipal council they were the dominant electors by far and European councillors had

49 C.S.O. 40/01/23. Rodwell to G.O.Conf. 10 May 1923. F.T. 27 Apr. 1923. In the Legislative Council no debate took place despite the request of the elected members other than Hedstrom and Marks. However, the elected members were permitted to briefly express their views on the subject but the Governor sided with his two nominees. (L.C.Debates 1923:101-104.)

50 Draft C.O. to O.A.G.Conf. 5 July 1912; C.O.83/106.
a monopoly. Yet they found no room for complacency here particularly regarding Suva, the capital.

To understand the tactics used by Europeans to entrench their political power in the municipalities it is essential to trace European concern on the issue of municipal franchise from the beginning of the twentieth century. The starting point might be the interim administration of William Lamon Allardyce in the interval between the departure of Governor Sir George O'Brien and the arrival of his successor, Sir Henry Jackson. Influenced by settler pressures, on municipal franchise particularly, Allardyce appointed a commission to consider proposals for the amendment of the towns ordinances of 1885, 1891 and 1892. Settler pressure may have been the result of demographic changes. Since 1891 the greatest increase in the European population had been in Suva, where their numbers had increased from 843 to 1,073 out of a total of 4,735 in 1901. But this was being offset by the influx of Indians and Fijians who numbered 1,728 and 701 respectively. Suva as the preserve of European commerce and residence was unlikely to persist for long. That they would become a numerical minority was obvious to the Europeans, what they did not wish was a similar reduction of their voice in the control of municipal affairs. They wanted to maintain their dominance.

The Commission appointed by Allardyce consisted of J.H.Garrick (a local lawyer-politician who had served as Attorney-General in the early days of British rule) and the Wardens of Suva and Levuka. Its task was to consider whether the right to vote ought to be restricted to those who could read and write elementary English and to those whose premises were valued for rating at £16 per annum or over. The Commission, however, while accepting the suggested literacy qualification, raised rateable property value for franchise to £20 p.a. But it failed to agree that the members of the Suva and Levuka Town Boards should represent different classes of electors. Recommendations had been made to the Commission that non-Europeans should choose separately two representatives of their own and these could be either Europeans or non-Europeans provided the latter could

51 Correspondence Relating to Proposed Amendment of the Towns Ordinance of 1885, 1891 and 1892 (1902-1903).
speak English. European voters alone were to elect the warden. Both propositions were rejected by the Commission, which wished to persist with the common franchise in municipal government as stipulated by the original ordinance. Where amendment was necessary it could be achieved within the existing framework by an increase in property and education qualifications.

Allardyce informed the two town boards that the Government was prepared to view favourably the advice of the commissioners to raise the qualifications which would apply without discrimination to all ratepayers.\(^52\) Despite this no action could be taken until the arrival of the new Governor, Sir Henry Jackson. In turn, Jackson chose to defer the issue and leave it to his successor, Sir Everard im Thurn and until the newly-elected Legislative Council had members from Suva and Levuka. Though he delayed action Jackson had nonetheless made a significant comment on the subject of municipal elections when he accused Indian and Polynesian voters of corruption.\(^53\) Unfortunately he failed to elaborate on the nature and extent of the alleged corruption, how it worked and who manipulated. Later European members of the Legislative Council supplied their version.

Events took a different turn under im Thurn. Officials did not concur with the attitudes of either Allardyce or Jackson. The Agent-General of Immigration, R.M. Booth, was against a literacy qualification.\(^54\) The Attorney-General, Ehrhardt, opposed change that was 'proposed not so much in the interest of education as with a view to excluding Indian and Chinese ratepayers'.\(^55\) The Governor and his Colonial Secretary agreed. The Colonial Secretary even advocated the abolition of the education rate as the Commission had recommended because small householders and occupiers being persons of slender means were unfairly defraying the cost of education of the rich. When the Executive Council decided that the whole subject be dropped the municipal situation reverted to the position before

\(^{52}\) ibid.


\(^{54}\) C.S.O.1183/02.

\(^{55}\) ibid.
Allardyce’s action. The issues and their implications, however, were far from dead.

Allied to the municipal franchise was the overall question of the performance of the two town boards. Involved in this was finance. To alleviate the difficulty the Government passed an ordinance (XV of 1905) granting the boards of Levuka and Suva the power to raise their general rate from 1/- to 2/- in the £. The six European members protested thereby raising doubts in the Colonial Office whether the introduction of the elective element in the Fiji Legislative Council had been premature. The Governor contended that the boards had run into debt through bad management because in Suva, in particular, responsible citizens took scant interest in the business of running their town, and as ratepayers refused to accept government control, and with it cheap and effective management, there was no alternative but to raise the rates. This indifference was most evident in the municipal elections.

After his election to the Legislative Council in 1908 J.M. Hedstrom, formerly Warden of Levuka, and now its elected member, took up the municipal question in his new role. His argument was that legislation passed in 1883 was, after twenty-five years, obsolete. Municipal legislation in Britain and neighbouring New Zealand took cognizance of new trends and Fiji ought to do likewise especially as the function of the two ports had expanded and diversified and the work of their boards was no longer confined to merely constructing roads and bridges. Therefore, he called for ‘more liberal municipal legislation, granting wider powers of self-government and increased revenues to the municipalities’. Government responded by accepting the motion and promising to set up the inevitable committee to investigate and recommend amendments. The request of Hedstrom,

56 Im Thurn to C.O.136, 30 Oct. 1905.
57 ibid.
58 ibid.
59 After an election for two auditors for Suva, wherein only a total of 180 votes were cast, the Fiji Times, 20 Nov. 1906 commented ‘our ratepayers are very apathetic in municipal matters’.
60 L.D. Debates 1908:49-52. F.T. 23 May 1908.
supported by his elected colleagues, was part of a European demand for a greater voice and control in the affairs of the country.

Out of this came the very comprehensive Municipal Institutions Ordinance, XXV of 1909. It had been endorsed by a public meeting in Suva and had an easy passage in the Council. For the purpose of this study the relevant clauses were 6 and 26. Had the possession of a wide ranging municipal ordinance been the only goal of the European politicians they would have concentrated on its operation. Within six months, before the ordinance had had a fair trial, J.B. Turner sought to restrict the coloured vote:

There are 305 names of coloured persons on the electoral roll. About 95% are coolies. Eighty per cent of these coloured people can neither read, write nor understand English. Hedstrom in support maintained that the coloured electors knew very little about voting and were 'certainly easy to influence and ... open to corruption'. Scott described having seen two coloured electors arriving at the poll with instructions to vote for particular candidates without even knowing what the contest was about. For him it was irrelevant that the proposal did 'savour slightly of class legislation' for 'it will be the means of ensuring that the better class is represented in the council as the men will be elected by

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61 F.T. 6 Nov. 1909.

62 Clause 6: '(1) Subject to the provisions of this Ordinance there shall be for the government of every town a council which shall consist where the population of ratepayers amounts to -
(a) Under six hundred of six members to be elected as hereinafter provided;
(b) Over six hundred but not exceeding two thousand of eight such members;
(c) Two thousand and upwards of ten such members.
(2) In addition to the members above provided for it shall be lawful for the Governor if the Council is in receipt of any funds from the general revenue of the Colony by virtue of subsections two and three of clause fifty-one hereof to appoint additional members as follows:-
   When the Council consists of six elected members two;
   When the Council consists of eight elected members three;
   When the Council consists of ten elected members four.
(3) Such members shall hold office for three years and may thereupon be re-appointed by the Governor.'

Clause 26: granted votes to occupiers, lessees and owners in the manner identical to Clause 14 of Ordinance V of 1883 cited as footnote 2 p.2.

63 L.C. Debates 1910:32.

64 ibid.
the better class of voters. J.B.Turner summed up the case:

I refer, Sir, to your message today, in which you say that Indians and others are densely ignorant. Quite right, they are, and that is why they should not vote. No man would lower himself to ask some of the people who vote for the town councillors for their votes. Under the present system you will not get the best man to fill the important positions on the town councils.

As a concession he was prepared to make the educational test applicable even to whites. The racial arrogance - that it was beneath the dignity of the white man to seek political support from a coloured person - was unconcealed. Rather than have the white man discard this attitude, the legislature should disenfranchise the coloured. On the Governor's promise to consider the issue in October when the amendments to the ordinance would be reviewed, Turner withdrew his motion. This was not the first intrusion of colour and race prejudice into local politics. What was new, however, was the Government's willingness to tolerate and condone overt prejudice while at the same time denying that it was so doing.

In November 1909, Dr.Fox, supported by Henry Scott, had moved:

That for the safety of the public health in Suva, it is desirable that a segregated area should be acquired by the Government, and that all natives should be required to live outside the town boundary except those in actual employ of the white residents as servants.

Scott pursued the subject at the next session in a question asking what steps the Government had taken to implement residential segregation. The Government was not prepared to take any action at that time. In May 1910 letters from Dr. Fox and the Town Clerk, W.Good, of Suva had called for legislation to prevent Fijians and

65 ibid.
66 ibid:33.
67 F.T.10 Nov. 1909.
68 L.C.Debates 1910:11.
69 ibid:12.
Indians erecting houses in areas occupied by Europeans. Good maintained that the Town Board had no power to thwart this and wished for areas to be set aside for Indian and Fijian houses. Sympathy existed for such a demand and the Executive Council, on 10 June 1910, advised in favour of residential segregation. But Governor im Thurn refused to pass the appropriate legislation, for in his view native houses were not the only insanitary dwellings.

Indians in Suva, likely to be most severely affected, were alarmed both by the designs to disenfranchise them and by the Suva Municipal Board's resolution calling for legislation favouring residential segregation. A petition was drafted deprecating the above intentions and requesting Indian representation in the Legislative Council. The Indians complained that though their numbers approximated to those of the Fijians, they had no members in the Legislative Council while the latter had two. They wanted 'the right to elect two English gentlemen to represent [them] in the Council'. The author of the draft petition and of the concept of European representatives for Indians was an ex-civil servant, G.A.F.W. Beauclerc. There was no response from the Government to Beauclerc's suggestion. But on the municipal question, the Attorney-General, Ehrhardt advised the Government against 'making any distinction on the ground of colour' because an illiterate person who paid rates was entitled to vote as much as one who could write. Eyre Hutson, the Colonial Secretary, added that sufficient facility and opportunity had not been provided to enable coloureds to obtain an adequate knowledge of English. But Governor im Thurn was less categorical and was not satisfied that the electorate would not be swamped by coloured voters who, he thought, had 'absolutely no concept

70 C.S.O. 3818/10.
72 C.S.O. 4608/10.
73 ibid. The petition does not appear to have been circulated or signed by the Indians. Beauclerc submitted the draft.
74 ibid.
75 C.S.O. 4281/10.
of their responsibilities in that respect'. On the franchise, Im Thurn did not display the same firmness as on residential segregation.

Temporarily the issues of the franchise and segregation sank into insignificance as the elected members became embroiled with the Government over official representation in the Municipal Council without a regular financial contribution from the former. The town boards had welcomed government representation and some financial control in return for aid but when the Secretary of State vetoed the latter the argument for the former was destroyed. 76

Anxious that the elective principle and the voice of the people through their representatives should not be diminished and eroded by the introduction of official influence without the quid pro quo of monetary grants, the European members threatened to resign. A major conflict on a constitutional principle seemed in the making. Strife was averted when Whitehall agreed to dispense with official nomination. As a safeguard, a clause was inserted providing for dissolution of a town council by the Governor in certain contingencies. 77

If anything the settler politicians had once more won a point.

The franchise issue was still alive and revived with vigour after a keenly contested municipal election in Suva in July 1911. The results deserve notice: 78

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Marks</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.H. Johnson*</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M. Scott</td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Harper*</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* Candidates of newly-formed Municipal Progressive Association originally called the Vigilance Committee.)

The defeat of Scott was ominous. His ego hurt, his status and standing in his small community not allowed to increase if not diminished, his pride injured, he found the obvious scapegoat in the coloured vote which he determined to eliminate with redoubled pressure. Equally determined was the Municipal Progressive Association as one of

76 Major to C.O.Conf. 29 Oct. 1910; C.O.83/97.
77 L.C. Debates 1910, Third Session: 2.
78 F.T. 25 July 1911.
its candidates had also suffered defeat. Though its guiding lights, men like Dr. Fox and W.H. Cuthbert, did not belong to the highest echelon of European society, they nonetheless shared kinship of views when it came to the coloured vote. The Association sought an audience with the new Governor, Sir Henry May, on the subject. Thereafter, it reported that Sir Henry favoured restriction either by rating or education to curtail illiterate Indians and Fijians from swamping the polls. 79

Henry May, strong-willed and subscribing to the racial outlook of the times, possessed very definite views on the municipal question. Suva, he described as 'in a very insanitary condition'. 80 Next he was opposed to municipal institutions in crown colonies. Hong Kong, whence he came and to which he was to return as Governor, was, in his opinion, a lot better than Singapore, Penang and Colombo all of which had municipal councils inspected by him for comparative purposes in 1895. 81

For Suva there were two alternatives: either wait for improvement or wait until degeneration made government intervention essential thereby rendering possible a complete takeover. He found that Scott, Marks and Turner favoured official representation in the council in return for government assistance for the maintenance of Victoria Parade (then the main street of Suva), costing approximately £200 p.a. On the qualification of voters he told the Secretary of State:

Under Section 20 of Ordinance XXV of 1909 the franchise is given to any occupier of any rateable property. This qualification is far too low and results in many quite ignorant and illiterate Fijians and Indians and Melanesians being armed with votes which they do not know how to use for they have no knowledge of the duties and responsibilities required of a municipal councillor. 82

He sought the franchise for those whose property was valued at not less than £25 p.a. While this would purge the roll of objectionable voters, it would 'not disfranchise Indian and Chinese storekeepers and others of the same races who are educated sufficiently to know how to use their

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79 F.T.10 Aug. 1911, 7 Sept. 1911.
80 May to C.O.Conf. 3 Aug. 1911; C.O.83/102.
81 ibid.
82 ibid.
votes'. Further, the ordinance ought to be so amended as to include in the municipal councils the Commissioner of Works, the Chief Medical Officer, and one other official nominated by the Governor. The town engineer was to be a member of the Public Works Department and the Governor's nominee. Under the circumstances this might have been a worthy compromise and placated local opinion. The Secretary of State refused to sanction May's proposals for the reconstitution of the municipality of Suva.\(^83\) Firstly, it was too soon to change the ordinance unless it could be proved to be 'quite unworkable'. Secondly, the claims of the property owners were adequately safeguarded by allotment of additional votes for those with rateable property in excess of £25 p.a. Thirdly, he did not think that the objection that the present voters were ignorant and illiterate was met by requiring not an educational test but a property qualification especially one as high as the annual value of £25. Most importantly, the Secretary of State did not repudiate the concept of an educational test.

May, favouring residential segregation for what he described as sanitary reasons, and wishing to gauge local opinion, sent a circular letter to 109 property owners in Suva; 93 of these favoured the reservation of areas for whites, 1 opposed it, and 15 did not reply mainly owing to absence from Fiji.\(^84\) Of 9 Indian freeholders, 5 approved May's plan. A Chinese merchant was equally favourable because the proposals would not affect 'Chinese living in European fashion'.\(^85\) Europeans generally appeared to support Sir Henry May.\(^86\)

Dyson Blair, the Commissioner of Lands, demarcated the European area comprising the commercial centre of Suva, and adjacent streets.\(^87\) By this means non-European businessmen, who kept small shops and lived within the premises would be excluded. Thus European business interests, which were chafing under increasing competition from Indians and Chinese, would be able to resume their past monopoly.

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\(^{83}\) C.O. to May Conf. 4 Oct. 1911; C.O.83/102.

\(^{84}\) May to C.O.61, 17 Feb. 1912; C.O.83/105.

\(^{85}\) C.S.O.3671/11.

\(^{86}\) ibid. F.T.25 July 1911.

\(^{87}\) Encl. May to C.O.61, 17 Feb. 1912; C.O.83/105.
It might not be an exaggeration to suggest that Sir Henry May, perhaps unwittingly, was aiding a conspiracy designed to make Suva the exclusive preserve of the white merchant. The Colonial Office refused consent. It was minuted there that such legislature would be repugnant as at that stage Whitehall was insisting 'with tiresome iteration to the self-governing Dominions the objectionability of distinguishing between Europeans and other sorts of persons'.

The attempt to achieve residential segregation by legislation was destroyed, once and for all. But this is not to imply that henceforth segregation by other devices was not practised in Suva.

Europeans, generally apathetic on municipal matters, were jolted when in May 1912, they discovered that one of the four nominated for the forthcoming town council elections was a Chinese, Ming Ting. European feeling was summed up by a correspondent to the press:

I cannot say much for the nominators' choice, especially when I see amongst them a Chinsman nominated by three so-called Britisher and an Indian (good mixture!). Poor Fiji! What are you coming to?

Mr Editor, I cannot think this nomination is seriously meant, and it is a very bad advertisement for Fiji.

The writer hoped that the affair would be treated as a joke as two of Ming Ting's nominators assured him it was intended to be.

T.F. Hirst explained how he had come to nominate Ming Ting and publicly disclaimed his willingness to support him. Hirst claimed that he had been stopped on the street by two men who had the reputation of being practical jokers. They sought his signature as they were trying as a practical joke to get Ming Ting to stand for the Council. Being in a hurry and thinking that the paper was a farcical petition to Ming Ting, he signed it. He was surprised and disgusted when he saw his name as one of Ming Ting's nominators, particularly when the names of the two who had obtained his signature were missing. This was refuted by James Callaghan who contended that

88 C.O. Minutes. ibid.
89 F.T. 1 June 1912.
90 Ming Ting was nominated by James Callaghan, T.F. Hirst, G. Taylor, H.G. Walter and Mathan (an Indian). F.T. 30 May 1912. None of the Europeans can be described as belonging to the upper crust of Fiji's snobbish settler society.
91 F.T. 1 June 1912.
he had been present when Hirst signed and Hirst had needed no inducement, being very enthusiastic about it. Callaghan went on to state that Ming Ting was a naturalized British subject who had never been slow to contribute to local requests for charity. Besides he had brought into the Colony a considerable amount of money which was invested in land and houses in Suva. As he was on the municipal roll there was no reason why he was unworthy of being a councillor. Another nominator, George Taylor, was equally adamant in defending his choice.

To those who had treated Ming Ting's nomination as a joke, or had been offended by it for purely racial reasons, election day brought an even greater surprise. The result:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ming Ting</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W.Barker</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.Hunt</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.A.F.W.Beauclerc</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>387</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That there were only 387 votes was in itself an example of not inconsiderable indifference. There were on the Suva roll 330 European voters having 795 votes, and 174 non-Europeans (i.e. styled native) with 220 votes. The Europeans were in a majority by far and on these figures there was no possibility of their being swamped by non-Europeans.

Though indignant the press admitted that Ming Ting had been 17 years in Suva and was 'one of the largest property owners in the town, and bears a reputation as a highly successful man of business, whose word is his bond'. Ming Ting's victory had rubbed salt into the wound of Anglo-Saxon pride. The real reasons behind his victory and the defeat of the other candidates (all Europeans) were ignored. The mass vote of Indians for Ming Ting was held responsible. The victory of the Chinese merchant was to be the pretext upon which to disenfranchise Indians.

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92 i bid.
93 F.T.4 June 1912.
94 F.T.6 June 1912.
95 i bid.
96 i bid.
Indeed Ming Ting's victory did arouse European voters. At an election barely a fortnight later, where there were four contestants, 616 votes were cast.7 At another election in the following month the poll again improved. Here two of the candidates were Henry Scott and John Maynard Hedstrom, both of whom made clear from the outset that as they were busy men and forced against their will to stand, they would not canvass for votes.9 One of their rivals, J.A. Mackay, on the other hand, was backed by a strong committee determined to work for his victory.99 Mackay made known that his object was the betterment of residential areas, of 'dwellings of the less influential ratepayers' like himself.100 He added: 'And I have a fair experience of what we may expect from a socially selected council, one that is dominated by selfish money power.' No doubt the jibe was directed at Scott and Hedstrom. Mackay's attempt to woo 'the working class' paid dividends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.J. Mackay</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M. Scott</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.M. Hedstrom</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.L. de Francoeur</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though Scott had also won, a racial explanation was again produced.101

7 F.T. 18 June 1912.
8 F.T. 9 July 1912.
9 F.T. 13 July 1912.
100 F.T. 16 July 1912.
101 'We find that 337 votes were cast for Cr Mackay and 408 for Messrs Scott and Hedstrom: if we give to each party half of the votes recorded in favour of Mr de Francoeur the democratic vote is 71 in arrears. Now there is hardly any doubt that a majority of the coloured voters who, judging by the informal ballot papers at the election for auditor, totalled about fifty - favoured Cr Mackay, because he was the only candidate who to any extent directly asked them to record their votes by adopting the usual method at these elections - namely, that of sending cabs to bring voters to the poll. And as these people cannot by any stretch of the imagination be said to 'endorse' any 'policy' or to know or care anything of any 'policy' 'decisive endorsement' is largely discounted. These are facts that no argument, no sophistry can upset, though they cannot affect the position that Cr Mackay is at the head of the poll and by a very large majority.' (F.T. 18 July 1912.)
Once elected to the Municipal Council Scott acted quickly in introducing a motion on 6 September that the Government be approached to amend the Municipal Institutions Ordinance of 1909 by making an education test compulsory for alien voters. Two councillors, Good and Mackay, suggested as an amendment that the proposed test be applicable to blacks as well as whites so as to remove the racial inference. Johnson, who had seconded Scott's motion, retorted that there was a very great difference between an illiterate white man and his black counterpart because many of the former possessed intelligence and knew what they were about, unlike the latter. Scott was unprepared to accept the amendment because his motion was intended to be in line with views earlier expressed by the Government. On the promise that he would inform the Government of their sentiments, Good and Mackay withdrew their proposal. Scott's original motion was adopted unanimously. Councillor Ming Ting was at the meeting and lodged no protest. It was also agreed that Turner (the Mayor) and Henry Scott would meet the Governor for the purpose on behalf of the Council.

Later Turner reported to the Council that while the Governor did not commit himself he gave the impression that 'if the matter was laid before him in due form and at the proper time, he would consider it favourably'. And the Governor had asked Scott to draft a short bill incorporating his intentions. The Bill, seeking to amend section 20 of Ordinance XXV of 1909 by inserting the words 'and who can read, write and speak the English language shall be entitled to vote' was presented to and approved by the Suva Municipal Council at its meeting of 2 October. Anyone, irrespective of race, could be required to undergo the education test at the discretion of the Mayor. Arbitrary powers were thus being granted to the Mayor currently J.B. Turner who was not famous for impartiality towards the darker races.

The Bill was introduced in the Legislative Council on 25 October by Henry Scott with a reiteration of the old arguments. He pleaded that the Bill be accepted without amendment; otherwise it

102 F.T. 7 Sept. 1912.
103 F.T. 19 Sept. 1912.
105 L.C. Debates 1912:92-100.
would be better withdrawn and referred to the Secretary of State. It provided the Mayor of Suva the opportunity to state categorically that he was 'appealing to the white people to keep this town a white town'.\textsuperscript{106} The Colonial Secretary countered that those likely to be disenfranchised had not been given the opportunity to acquire adequate knowledge of English:

> My opinion is that ample provision should be made for interpretation and for translation of electoral documents into the vernaculars of the people voting, if necessary. \textsuperscript{107}

His amendment was lost by 9 votes to 8. In the free vote, which the Governor had authorized at the request of the elected members, all but two officials and one of the Fijian representatives, Kadavulevu, voted with the Colonial Secretary. On the other side were the six European elected members, the Native Commissioner, the Registrar-General and Jone Madraiwiwi. The vote of Madraiwiwi was crucial. By supporting those he did, he was not merely restricting Indians but acting contrary to the interests of those he purported to represent. There were no further obstacles as the Bill passed through the committee without amendment and was read a third time and passed. Governor Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott announced that he would reserve the Bill for His Majesty's signification.

In his despatch to the Secretary of State the Governor recommended the approval of the Bill for reasons which had been clearly explained by its advocates.\textsuperscript{108} At the same time Sweet-Escott told the Colonial Office the Government took no responsibility as the Bill had been drafted by Scott. He also enclosed a petition against the Bill from those likely to lose their privilege. Among the signatories were Ming Ting, and a Samoan pastor. The deputation, that had also come to the Governor to seek redress, had been sent away with the explanation that nothing could be done as the Bill was before the Secretary of State. Sweet-Escott described the deputation as consisting 'of respectable if not very responsible persons, but it could hardly be regarded as representative of the non-European population'.

\textsuperscript{106} ibid:96.
\textsuperscript{107} ibid:98.
\textsuperscript{108} Sweet-Escott to C.O.3\textsuperscript{1}4\textsubscript{11}, 16 Dec. 1912; C.O.83/110.
On receipt of the Governor's correspondence at the Colonial Office lengthy minutes were written though most of these were concerned with whether the Bill was a private member's bill or a private bill, as Fiji's Attorney-General had advised, and the technical implications involved. But two important points were made. First, that in Ceylon ballot papers contained the names and descriptions of candidates in English, Singhalese and Tamil, all attended to by the municipal council itself. And that it was in the interests of the aspiring candidates to ensure that their constituents understood the election procedure. Second, the test proposed, i.e. an ability to read, write and speak English, was considerably more than having a knowledge of English. Experience in the East had shown that there were important merchants trading with Europe who could speak English for purposes of their business but could not read and write it. By inference the Fiji proposals would disenfranchise such significant men. Generally, in the Colonial Office there was a consensus that a good case had not been made for the imposition of the stringent test. Suspicion also existed about the real motives of Scott and his colleagues. It was seen as an attempt to disenfranchise Indians and Chinese shopkeepers as a consequence of Ming Ting's victory in 1911. Hence the Colonial Office refused to sanction the Bill despite Sweet-Escott's recommendation.

Refusal was not accepted as final defeat in Suva. Early in 1913 J.B. Turner resigned as mayor and opinion was that he was opposed to anyone but a European sitting as a member in the Municipal Council though he had remained in his position for several months after Ming Ting's election. And when Ming Ting's tenure expired in December 1911, he quietly withdrew without seeking re-election. Had he chosen to contest his seat an interesting fight might have ensued. Perhaps he realized that defeat was certain. If he so reasoned his logic was sound. European interest in the municipal contests was on the increase and they strongly outnumbered the coloured voters. For

109 F.T. 13 Jan. 1913, 3 July 1913.
an election in May, 1057 votes had been cast. At the time Europeans possessed 773 votes and Indians and others 443, a total of 1216. It was the opinion of the Fiji Times that no Fijians had voted, but four Polynesians had done so and the Indian vote had been particularly strong. The elections of November 1914 to fill three vacancies at which Ming Ting would have been required to seek re-election were again closely fought.

W.H.T. Smith 404 Elected  
J.A. Mackay 389 Elected  
W.H. Johnson 311 Elected  
D.J. Drake 279  
W.W. Barker 260  
R.N. Ginn 182  
Informal 17  

1,842

And on the same day 301 voted Pearce for auditor and 248 for H. Taylor, while there were 130 informal votes. The municipal roll at that stage had 680 ratepayers, 339 Europeans and 341 coloureds. Though there were two fewer Europeans on the roll than coloureds, the former possessed a greater number of votes and therefore greater power to influence the outcome of elections. Of these 205 Europeans (about 60% of them) and 117 coloureds (barely 34%) voted. According to the Fiji Times, 105 coloured votes went to Mackay, 68 to Barker, 39 to Ginn, 8 to Smith, 1 to Johnson, while Drake received none. Assuming these figures to be correct, 117 coloured ratepayers cast 221 votes. Therefore 205 Europeans were responsible for the remaining 1,621 votes. Again assuming that the figures of the Fiji Times were correct, it is possible to calculate the likely results if the Indian

110 The results were: F.E. Riemenschneider 330  
W.P. Marr 260  
A.T. Hay 239  
J.H. Butler 220  
Informal 5  

1,057

(F.T. 5 May 1914.)

111 F.T. 10 Nov. 1914.
votes were removed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.H.T. Smith</td>
<td>404 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.A. Mackay</td>
<td>389 - 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.H. Johnson</td>
<td>311 - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.J. Drake</td>
<td>279 - 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.W. Barker</td>
<td>260 - 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.N. Ginn</td>
<td>182 - 39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( \text{(*) Would have been elected.} \)

No significant change would have resulted. Mackay would have slipped from second to third place and the difference would have been close between him and Drake. Apart from Mackay the only two others who received any noticeable support from the coloureds were Barker and Ginn who finished at the bottom. To many Europeans, a quest for Indian votes was contemptible. And Mackay when thanking his supporters was told by an interjector to thank the Indians. His retort was that Britain had accepted Indians at the Front during the current war and he was not ashamed of the Indian votes he had received.

At this stage European politics in Suva was split into two factions. One comprised Mackay, a man in his late twenties, a small storekeeper on the Nabukalou Creek. This element was opposed to the very prosperous social elite, the type acceptable at Government House, and headed by John Maynard Hedstrom, managing director of one of the largest trading houses in the country, Henry Milne Scott, the leading lawyer of the town, who had on occasions acted as Attorney-General previously, and J.B. Turner, a wealthy business man and landowner, not as distinguished as the other two mentioned, but vocal and ambitious. The division was based on class. That headed by Mackay claimed to speak for the working class and posed as rebels against the establishment which was accused of self-interest and indifference to the grievances of lesser men. Lacking the respectability and prestige of the older and more prosperous elite, Mackay and his colleagues were prepared to use the Indian vote to obtain a voice and influence for themselves in

112 Encl. Sweet-Escott to C.0.356, 1 Dec. 1916.
the Municipal Council. Those against whom such tactics were employed found the situation reprehensible. Europeans were permitted to have their differences but the losers considered it bad taste to employ non-whites to tilt the balance in an all-white quarrel.

After each election the usual complaint was made of the role of Indian voters. But after rebuffs from the Colonial Office an endeavour was made to clarify the settler viewpoint. It was emphasized that the objection was not to Indians as such but to the fact that a great majority of them were illiterate and thus susceptible to exploitation by 'an unscrupulous electioneer'. The remedy proposed for the malaise was not the control of the unscrupulous electioneer but the elimination of the illiterate voter.

In Sweet-Escott the Europeans of Suva had a Governor very sympathetic towards their aspirations and were encouraged to try a change of tactics. A petition from 83 ratepayers were presented to the Governor with complaints about neglected roads and poor sanitary service, suggesting that the Colonial regime invoke its emergency powers and resume administration of local government by dissolving the existing Council. The Executive Council favoured a commission of inquiry into the matter. But its two unofficial members, Marks and Scott, advised that no reply be given till a report had been produced by the commissioners. This was unacceptable to the majority whose advice the Governor followed in his reply that an inquiry would be instituted. Both Henry Marks and Henry Scott were amongst the petitioners who included J.B. Turner and other prominent business men. By discrediting the existing Council as incompetent the petitioners hoped to put power into the hands of those they would be able to influence more readily. The Mayor at the time was Dr. Brough, an ex-civil servant unpopular with local European opinion. The device of petition was intended more for the purpose of removing Brough and his supporters than eradicating any real evil.

The new strategy was to demand that qualifications for the municipal franchise be similar to those for the Legislative Council. Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott reiterated the case to the Secretary of...
State, adding that prominent citizens refused to participate in municipal elections because they were certain to be outvoted by the ignorant coloured vote. Sweet-Escott explained that he was reluctant to advocate this unless the restricted franchise was certain to improve the conduct of municipal affairs. He did not think anything would be achieved through investigation by a commission of inquiry. In fact, it would split Suva into two camps, and the larger group would support the Council. Also it was unlikely that some of the petitioners would be prepared to make public statements of complaint. This in itself was an admission by Sweet-Escott that only a minority was dissatisfied with the Council, and by inference the Governor appeared to be on their side. In his explanation for the deplorable state of Suva he did not blame the Council totally. There were other contributing factors: the heavy rainfall in Suva during the previous six months; damage caused by motor traffic during the last two years; upheaval of streets for the purpose of laying down water pipes; inadequate finance; and the recent labour shortage. He denied that a less liberal franchise would achieve any improvement. Nor did he regard 'an elected body as the best instrument that can be devised for the economical and efficient administration of the municipal affairs of a typical town like Suva where there is no leisure class as there is in European towns, in which municipal administration is not always unsuccessful'. He described debates in the Municipal Council as contentious and acrimonious, and found Dr. Brough taking little part in supervising administrative duties. Yet Sweet-Escott was unwilling to take over control of the municipality unless pressed by a majority of voters. But he had earlier admitted that a majority might not favour this step. Under the circumstances he wondered whether the Secretary of State would authorize an initial loan of £20,000 plus further sums for installing an electric light system and a fire brigade. In return, three officials would be appointed to administer Suva as 'such an arrangement would be accepted as satisfactory both by the supporters and the opponents of the present Municipal Council'. Later in another despatch the Governor argued that a Board of Commissioners was the best solution provided the Secretary of State could authorize the

115 ibid.
stipulated loan. If this were not possible then the Secretary of State ought to approve the course favoured by Scott. In the Colonial Office there was some division of opinion. One view was that the situation was not as bad as Scott and his friends painted it and there was no reason for approving a bill earlier repudiated because of its underlying principles. Another found the appointment of a Board of Commissioners as the best solution in a colony lacking enough capable persons. Finally, the Secretary of State's own decision proved crucial:

I should prefer to leave the elected municipality somewhat longer; but I would not object to the same educational test for Municipal as for Legislative Council voters, but of course the property qualification must not apply. So it was conveyed to Fiji that the electoral character of the municipality must not be abandoned, and an education test was therefore authorized.

The necessary Bill was introduced by the Attorney-General in July 1915 as the issue now had the blessing of the Government. He specifically emphasized that the legislation was not directed against the Indian community. Before the debate the Levuka Municipal Council had suggested the amendment be 'and who can read, write or speak the English language' thereby leaving franchised those ratepayers 'who have a colloquial knowledge of English'. No such compromise was offered by the Suva Council. Again it was the

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116 Sweet-Escott to C.O.425, 4 Dec. 1914; C.O.83/123.
117 There had been yet another debate in the Legislative Council on 17 Nov. 1914 on the subject.
120 L.C. Debates 1915:90. He added: 'They still have the right but must qualify to exercise that right. From what I have read on the subject, and heard in this Council, I gather that a certain class of Indian now possessing the right of franchise had, at election time, flagrantly abused the trust and confidence imposed in him. It is true, that some step should be taken to remedy this outstanding evil.' ibid:91.
121 C.S.O. 5687/15.
122 A public meeting had been held in Suva and between 110 and 120 persons turned up including coloured and non-ratepayers. A large majority approved the proposals but no Indian or coloured ratepayers voted. C.S.O. 5715/15.
intransigent Scott who successfully opposed the suggestion from Levuka. For him a colloquial knowledge of English was not enough as this would cause confusion at the polls if voters could not read or write.\textsuperscript{123}

If Europeans were placated, Indians were incensed as they were to be the ones most adversely affected. In the granting of the franchise for the Legislative Council they had been ignored and now some of those with municipal franchise were to be largely eliminated from the roll. What minimal influence they possessed would be eradicated. With their petition seeking the disallowance of the Bill, they submitted 'that all difficulties might be overcome were proper arrangements made for the employment of interpreters, and were we protected from the improper interference of white men interested in elections'.\textsuperscript{124} Their plea was in vain. When the election came 14 Indians who had still retained their franchise despite the change in law protested that because of injustice to their compatriots they would refrain from exercising their rights unless restoration was made.\textsuperscript{125} Once more the response was negative.

They sought aid from abroad. They asked unsuccessfully for assistance from the Indian Congress Committee in London, and from the nationalist leader Pundit Malaviya in Allahabad to help block the new legislation.\textsuperscript{126} The Government of India also protested. It quoted the literacy rates of the various racial components in Fiji from the 1911 Population Census (9.1% for Indians, 36.5% for Europeans, 51% for Half-Castes, 52.8% for Fijians and 58% for Rotumans) and concluded that the Indians would be the worst sufferers.\textsuperscript{127} Until the educational needs of Indians had been adequately met the measure was not free from objection and the Indian Government felt 'constrained to point out that wealthy and respectable Indian traders and property holders will have a

\textsuperscript{123} L.C.\textit{Debates} 1915:92. Scott also complained that the Bill had come too late.

\textsuperscript{124} A petition of 129 Indians, 120 of them ratepayers was printed in C.P.67/15. C.S.O. 5773/15.

\textsuperscript{125} C.S.O. 10819/15.

\textsuperscript{126} C.S.O. C54/15.

\textsuperscript{127} I.O. to C.O. 23 Feb. 1916; C.O.83/134.
legitimate grievance if a more active policy for the extension of the necessary educational facilities to their children is not pursued, and every effort is not made for the removal of the disability now imposed on the Indian community.

An important argument for change had been that it would encourage participation from candidates of high calibre. The results in Suva failed to substantiate this contention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.H.T. Smith</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Wishart</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.E. Riemenschneider</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.H. Millett</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M. Scott</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.H. Johnson</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.A. Mackay</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A. Miller</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>Elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Wilson</td>
<td>293</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.F. Taylor</td>
<td>275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.E. Brown</td>
<td>274</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.G. Sturt</td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Good</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.S. Green</td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the eight elected, 5 had previously sat on the Council. Only Wishart, Miller, and Millett were new-comers. Mackay, who had been the subject of much abuse, won again; there was no substantial difference between him and Scott. Out of 368 European electors 255 had exercised the franchise and utilized 608 ballot papers; of the coloured vote of 35, one Fijian and one Indian recorded 3 votes making a total of 611 ballot papers of which 23 were informal.128 Nor was there any startling change in Levuka.129 At the Colonial Office it

128 C.S.O. 10317/15.
129 C.S.O. 10500/15.
was noted: 'Probably the alteration in the franchise had no effect.'

By 1915 then the Europeans had consolidated their political power. They possessed considerable voice to influence policy in their own favour provided this did not menace British obligations towards the Fijians. In fact Government was prepared to collude with Europeans to a degree to protect them as well. But their position was not to remain unchallenged. Judging from their efforts to restrict the municipal franchise by a stringent education test they were aware of the challenge to their authority. They were particularly worried about the Indian population, rapidly increasing and diversifying its involvement in the colony they were making their new home.

INDIAN migration to Fiji began in 1879. Thereafter until 1916, some 62,837 Indians came as indentured labourers.\(^1\) The Indians' first contact with the Colony was as labourers under this system and their first impressions of the country were developed over that period of five years when they were legally assigned to a planter, in most cases on the estates of the C.S.R.Company. Their treatment here was crucial in determining their behaviour and relationships with Europeans and the Government afterwards.

How the Indian regarded the indenture system can be illustrated from the account of Totaram Sanadhya, who after serving his five years remained in Fiji for another sixteen.\(^2\) In his view the indenture system had replaced slavery to cater for the white man's need of cheap labour. The Negro refused to be ensnared a second time so European glances were cast towards India and China as alternative sources. According to Sanadhya, Indians were worked like animals with the planters benefiting from the fruit of their toil while the Government remained indifferent to their plight. Awakened at 4 a.m., they had to work for 10 hours a day for 5 days and for another half-a-day on the sixth, all the time mistreated by overseers. Their employers, especially the C.S.R.Company, were flint-hearted without a trace of compassion, seeing their labourers as their mules and oxen. Throughout Sanadhya's pamphlet

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1 The indenture system in Fiji is adequately treated in K.L.Gillion, (1962). It is not intended to reconsider the subject here but merely to emphasize its impact on the Indians themselves and how it influenced their political behaviour. A very readable account of the system is found in W.Gill, (1970), which describes the author's reminiscences as a C.S.R.Company overseer in the last days of indenture.

2 Totaram Sanadhya 1914, a short pamphlet in Hindi.
this analogy between labourer and beast is frequent.\(^3\) And the comparison appears reasonable in the light of the reminiscences of Walter Gill.\(^4\) No person who went through these wished for a second dose if he could avoid it, and this might explain why extremely few re-indentured on the expiry of their first term. An indentured labourer who had come to Fiji in 1911 and was still alive in 1970 concluded after relating his experience under the system: 'They were hard days for us and I am glad that time will not bring them back again.'\(^5\)

The experience of the indenture system was without question the most important single factor in determining Indian political behaviour. As Burton Benedict found in Mauritius, so in Fiji its memories and their legacy linger to the present.\(^6\) Had the labourer been repatriated to India at the end of his contract the Colony would not have been left with such a heritage. Instead he had the option of settling in Fiji or of waiting another five years after the expiry of his contract for repatriation at government expense. Altogether 25,615 out of 62,837 Indians were repatriated under this agreement during the indenture period.\(^7\) Even though some of those repatriated (the exact number is unknown) later returned to Fiji, those who left permanently represented a significant proportion. This was a reflection on both the conditions within the Colony and on the system itself. Yet the majority remained in Fiji and for these, despite the rigours of the past, the Colony offered them prospects in the future as 'free' men.

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3 Indian politicians even today speak thus of the indenture system. It is wrong to think they are fabricating, this is what they have been told by those who experienced the system. A friend once told me of having seen whip scars on his father's back put there by a white C.S.R. Company overseer. Another related of having seen an old man with the scars of fetters on his feet. Over the course of years whenever I have heard people speak of indenture (girmit as they call it) they always spoke of woe and suffering. The Girmit Festival started in 1968 in Suva and is now held annually; one can see a few of these former indentured labourers and speak to them of their experiences.


THE birth of Indian politics in Fiji was associated with the system that brought them to the Colony. It had nothing to do with government, or opposition to it, rather it was an attempt to seek redress from what was found irksome in the indenture system. And perhaps the first action occurred about December 1880 when a number of Indians on the Sahl Estate at Naitasiri refused to work and 'created a disturbance giving considerable annoyance and causing serious loss to the employers'.\(^8\) In their defence the labourers argued that they had not been engaged to do task work. The Stipendiary Magistrate described the incident as a test case in court as to whether labourers were to dictate terms to their employers or to be governed by them.\(^9\) The question of tasks was the major issue in indenture politics. Over-tasking was the cause of the strike of 300 labourers in 1886 at the C.S.R. Company's Navuso estate.\(^10\) From the beginning to the last days strife between employers and their labourers often involved the question of what constituted a fair task.\(^11\) An official reporting to the Colonial Secretary described the labourers as:

> a people who know that the sole cause of their presence in the Colony is to work. Coolies know that they came here to work.

Knowing fully their expected role, not all Indians were prepared to tolerate its miseries, at least some sought to improve their working conditions. The disputes of 1886 in Koronivia, 1899 in Ba, 1903 in Labasa (involving the Pathans) provide apt illustration.

This is also borne out by perhaps the first recorded public utterance of the Indians in Rewa and Suva in 1887, although here both 'free' as well as indentured labourers were involved. The Rewa meeting was held for the purpose of ventilating grievances and seeking the means of redress.\(^13\) There were three specific complaints: first, that many of them were already 'free' and more would shortly join that group but land was unavailable for settlement;

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\(^8\) C.S.O.46/81,588/81.  
\(^9\) ibid.  
\(^10\) Gillion 1962:83.  
\(^12\) C.S.O.1107/86,\text{ibid}/87.  
\(^13\) F.T.27 Aug.1887.
second, the liquor prohibition ordinance was discriminatory and therefore objectionable; and third, interference which deprived them of opium was an infringement of their rights as British subjects. As Government was to blame for this situation they would use no more dutiable goods, eschew rice, and live as far as possible on local food. This would enable them to save enough money to get them out of Fiji. The Indians must have seen their position as desperate to resolve on such a course of action, especially when they knew that they could be repatriated after 10 years continuous stay and the first among them would qualify in 1889. Conditions on the Rewa were difficult, and a press report stated that in the first 8 months of 1887, 643 persons were brought from Rewa to Suva for trial and a very large proportion of these were Indians. 14

Another meeting was held a couple of months later in Muanikau, where all the Indians living in and around Suva gathered one Sunday afternoon. 15 Here the rates of wages were discussed but most of the time was spent on the question of loss of caste as a result of certain tasks that they were required to do. Labourers engaged in night work for the Town Board were stigmatized as a disgrace to their caste and urged to quit; they explained that they could not do so until their indenture had expired.

These initial meetings illustrate the nature of Indian politics in the early years. The issues discussed were recurring themes and became magnified with the passage of time. No single leader emerged yet. Rather it was the group which spoke, and led, and bore responsibility. A leader could be punished and eliminated by the employers or the authorities by the threat of being deprived of his means of livelihood; but a united group was not so easily disposed of; and pressure and persecution of it might lead to concerted action such as strikes on the part of its supporters. This is not to imply that 'ringleaders' were not to be singled out and enabled to go about their business with impunity; solidarity gave greater protection.

Not all the discussions took place in public meetings. Frequently there were smaller gatherings on Saturdays and Sundays where the Ramayan was read and communal matters discussed afterwards;

14 F.T. 7 Sept. 1887.
15 F.T. 2 Nov. 1887.
newspapers were circulated and collections taken up. In this way Indians maintained contact not only with each other but also with India and events there. However, they did not intend to plan uprisings or form discontent in the Colony, as two C.S.R. Company officials tried to convey to their fellow Europeans, and thereby succeeded in frightening the white women of the Lautoka district. Police constables attended some such meetings in cognito and found no evidence of plans for any insurrection though the sub-inspector of police in Lautoka proposed to raid certain houses to confiscate seditious literature. As official opinion had it:

there are too many breeds and castes of Indians in this district \textit{Lautoka}, and their interests are too varied, for a rising to be successfully arranged without the matter leaking out almost immediately. Indian meetings were not escaping the notice of other communities; dangerous interpretations were sometimes placed on innocent occurrences.

Some of these gatherings had a legal, even punitive purpose, but punishment was meted out among Indians themselves rather than imposed on members of other races. A case in point was the 'mock court' meetings held in Rewa during 1910. On one occasion a man was forced to pay £6 to the father of a girl he no longer intended to marry or to provide a dinner at his own expense for a number of people. If he failed to comply he was boycotted socially. These proceedings were neither secret nor seditious but irksome to those adjudged guilty. The police sub-inspector of Rewa wrote:

It seems to have been the practice amongst certain influential Free Indians in this district such as storekeepers, cane planters, sirdars of estates to hold secret council meetings which are split up so as to control different parts of the district with an appointed speaker.

Indian exploited Indian. Class conflicts were in the making.

Another report mentions a meeting of over a hundred Indian residents of Samabula, Muanivatu, Nasinu, Tamavua and the surrounding

\begin{itemize}
\item[16] C.S.O.2456/09.
\item[17] ibid.
\item[18] ibid.
\item[19] C.S.O.6937/10.
\item[20] ibid.
\end{itemize}
areas called by Duli Chand to petition the Governor for compensation to relatives of those involved in a recent accident at the Harbour Works in Suva. Peter Grant suggested that the petitioners should also press for higher wages and threaten strike action if their request was not met. Several of those present stated that they were poor men and could not afford to stop work. In view of Grant's action in 1920 perhaps he wished to stir these men against the authorities and then help suppress them by aligning himself with the Government, gaining the blessing of the latter at the expense of the poorer elements within his community. Obviously the working men had little faith in Grant and the rejection of his advice indicates that his standing in his community was not high. He was recognized as a mischievous agitator motivated by self-interest. By 1917 the influence of men like Grant was on the decline because of events of the preceding years.

The 1901 Constitution, which denied the Indians the franchise presented a new challenge. Hitherto no race had possessed elective political representation in the Legislative Council. It would have been futile for the Indians who had come essentially as labourers to demand it for themselves. Besides, this privilege did not even exist in India at that stage. But when the Europeans and Fijians were given representation in the Legislative Council and the Indians were excluded, the Indian community became aware of its political status vis-à-vis the other races. Then in 1909 Indians in their mother country were given the right to choose their representatives to the Viceroy's Council. Any sense of innate inadequacy was thereby removed. For Indians abroad the basis of their rights had been enunciated by Lord Salisbury's despatch of 1875. The relevant section read:

> Above all things we must confidently expect, as an indispensable condition of the proposed arrangements, that the Colonial laws and their administration will be such that Indian settlers who have completed the terms of service to which they agreed as the

21 C.S.O.3558/17.

22 Sanadhya 1914:3.
return for the expense of bringing them to the Colonies, will be in all respects free men, with privileges no whit inferior to those in any other class of Her Majesty's subjects resident in the Colonies. 23

But the Government of India was unwilling to accept the 'proposed arrangements' and involve itself in Indian emigration; it preferred an attitude of neutrality, neither encouraging nor discouraging those wishing to go abroad as labourers. And recruitment continued despite its abuses. By its rejection of Salisbury's proposals the Government had also jettisoned its conditions, so it might be argued. Yet the crux of Salisbury's despatch was that India should supply labour abroad. This continued until 1916 in Fiji. The neutrality of the raj in India was inconsequential because it neither stopped emigration nor hampered it. If, as some argued, Salisbury's conditions could be regarded as inapplicable because of India's rejection of his despatch, the statement of the Sanderson Committee was surely relevant:

The present Administration itself fully recognizes the value of the Indians as permanent settlers, and is willing to concede them the enjoyment of equal rights. The whole tenor of the correspondence between India and the Colony shows that it was on this condition that indentured emigration to Fiji has been allowed in the past, and any measures directed towards lowering the political status of the immigrants or reducing their economic freedom would in our opinion, involve a breach of faith with those affected. 24

In Fiji, equality in practice was non-existent. Indians had no representation in the Legislative Council while Europeans elected six members and Fijians indirectly chose two chiefs. Further, in 1915, through European pressure, they were virtually removed from the Municipal Roll. There were other disabilities imposed upon them, such as the discriminatory liquor ordinance. Hence there arose the necessity to fight for political rights. To be told that their rights as British subjects would not be curtailed and to find they were indeed denied them, that they were not equal with others, stirred Indians to strive for what they thought was rightfully theirs. This new awareness came gradually and was inspired certainly by a similar struggle in India at the turn of the century. The need for unity, for discussion among themselves and for leadership, all dawned upon the ex-indentured men as they felt the sting of continued discrimination even though freed of their bondage. It was the

24 Cmd 5192:87.
discovery of new needs, and the indignation with inequality of status that led the more active among them to call on their counterparts in India for guidance and assistance. One such cry was for a leader from abroad, someone better equipped by education than themselves.

In the first years of the twentieth century from the ranks of the ex-indentured Indians there were emerging leaders interested in political affairs in a purer sense. Men such as J.P. Mahraj, Babu Ram Singh, Ram Rup, and others, among them some locally-born, gathered around Totaram Sanadhya and met frequently in Suva to discuss matters of Indian concern. These men, through Sanadhya chiefly, it seems, were in close contact with leaders and happenings in India. Out of this link and the meetings two positive steps resulted: the approach to India and Gandhi for an English-speaking Indian lawyer for Fiji, and the formation in 1911 of the British Indian Association aimed at alleviating the conditions of the Indians.

Consequently D.M. Manilal, a lawyer who had hitherto championed Indian rights in Mauritius arrived in Fiji in 1912. He was given a tumultuous welcome at the wharf by the Indian people. He informed the press that he had come to Fiji at 'the invitation which had been extended to him some time ago by some of the time-expired Indians here, and the object ... to practise law'. It was later reported that on a Sunday he went up the Rewa River and was entertained at Naselai by Totaram, an Indian planter:

Hundreds of Indians, free and indentured, were assembled to welcome the learned Babu, and a large number of Fijians danced mekes in his honour and presented him with mats.

Judging from the manner in which he was received, much was expected of Manilal. In fact, the Mauritian authorities had regarded him as a mischievous agitator, however, the Colonial Office was unperturbed about his arrival in Fiji as it viewed him as irksome but harmless.

26 It appears that A.C. Mayer's contention that this was the first secular association founded by Indians seems justified. Mayer 1963:30.
28 F.T. 5 Sept. 1912.
29 F.T. 19 Sept. 1912.
30 C.O. Minutes to Sweet-Escott to C.O. 235, 12 July 1915; C.O. 83/126.
The arrival of Manilal in 1912 opened a new dimension in Indian politics. Henceforth they had their own champion who was willing to confront both the Europeans and the colonial regime. The Indian voice had to be heard, their grievances listened to, if not, assuaged. Within a short time he became the spokesman of the Indians partly through his own efforts and partly because there was no one else to vie for that position. His advice was invariably accepted and his leadership followed without question by his supporters. His major contribution lay, not in making Indians aware of their disabilities, they had been fully aware of these themselves, but in showing them how these might be remedied. Indeed he was aided by the Indians themselves for without response from them his efforts might have been in vain. But his role was indispensable, without him local leaders, too aware of their own shortcomings of fluency in English and in dealing with Europeans, would have remained without direction and spent more time in self-pity than in efforts to remove what they saw as their fetters. He provided guidance for action because of the absence of dynamic leadership, a fact, which did not escape official comment. While his activities seemed to have been confined generally to an area stretching from Nausori to Navua with Suva in the middle, his reputation and influence apparently extended beyond that into the cane farming areas of Viti Levu and to Vanua Levu.

As he was a lawyer he originally sought redress through the courts of law. Here he was kept busy by compatriots because other advocates were providing unsatisfactory service. Often lawyers took retainers from their Indian clients but failed to appear in court on their behalf and when those victimised sought compensation through another solicitor he refused to take action against a fellow professional.

For his efforts to arouse Indians Manilal brought upon himself the ire of Europeans, including officials. He decried the 'regrettable tendency amongst Indians sometimes to exaggerate the wrongs done to them by Europeans as also a tendency many times to pocket insults given by Europeans to them quietly'.

It was Manilal who changed the name of the British Indian

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31 C.S.0.8910/16.
32 C.S.0.7927/19.
33 C.S.0.10939/1.
34 Indian Settler May-June 1917.
Association to the Indian Imperial Association of Fiji and tried to transform it into a representative voice of the Indian community. But it never had widespread support. He had intentions of forming a colony-wide organization. In January 1916 he informed the Acting Agent-General of Immigration that the Indian Society of Fiji was in the process of formation but it does not appear to have gone beyond that stage. Though the intended society did not eventuate, its objects epitomized the work that Manilal did himself or through the Indian Imperial Association of Fiji. An aspect was involvement in the first Indian journal, the bilingual (Hindi and English) Indian Settler which lasted a very short time indeed and collapsed through a lack of funds. Gillion suggests that Manilal was its English editor for a time. The journal claimed to be a 'medium for the advocacy of the Indian cause in Fiji' with the achievement of the following goals: equality for Indians with other races and Indian unity, education, and defence 'against imputation of encouraging slavery and demonstrate our abhorrence of the indenture system'. For the Government the implication was that it would not be permitted to ignore any Indian grievance, real or imagined. Frequent complaints were not likely to endear anyone to officials in a colony where the general belief was always that the interests of the Indians were more than adequately looked after.

Officialdom and Europeans generally were even more infuriated by Manilal's willingness to use external help to bring pressure to bear on the Fiji Government. For the purpose he utilized the services of the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association of Bombay, politicians

35 C.S.O. C25/19, 5310/19. The Agent-General of Immigration minuted in September 1919 that it had neither a large following nor any standing in the Colony and its membership had shown a slight increase only during the recent strike of Indian motor car owners and drivers who regarded the Association as their mouthpiece.

36 C.S.O. 10798/15.

37 Gillion 1962:159.


39 C.S.O. 307/16.

40 '... there is no part of the Empire where Indians may enjoy greater advantages and fewer disabilities than in this Colony.' C.P. 9/21.
and the Indian press to publicize what he considered disabilities imposed on Indians in the Colony. Yet his was not always destructive criticism. He recognized the value of Fiji as a region for Indian settlement and encouraged migration from India.

There can be no doubt that 'the work of Doctor Manilal led to a reawakening of self-respect among the Indians'. It was only after his arrival that Indians began protesting against the indenture system itself. In 1913 they organized a petition in protest. With his support they gradually acquired confidence and became more vocal. Manilal too was responsible in some way for Totaram Sanadhya's campaign against the indenture system in India. But in any evaluation of Manilal's opposition to indenture two points ought to be noted. It was alleged that he himself kept indentured servants to the end and prosecuted one of them for desertion; and secondly, he accepted the money paid to employers on the abolition of the system though he had described this recompensation as 'blood money'.

In his efforts to arouse Indian political consciousness Manilal was helped by two other individuals. One was his wife Jaikumari Devi, who, says C.F. Andrews, was 'loved for her great devotion to the poor, and for her fearless patriotism'. The second person was C.F. Andrews, who visited Fiji in 1915 and again in 1916 and went from house to house in his investigation of the Indians' plight. During his visits Andrews also started schools for Indians in rural areas in his efforts to alleviate one of their major problems. But it must be noted that

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**References**

3. Prasad 1962:7-8. This work is in Hindi.
7. C.S.O.5087/20; Rodwell to C.O.206,28 Jul.1920; C.O.83/152.
Manilal's success in getting the Indians to articulate their grievances against the indenture system was indispensable for the success of Andrews' own mission. The work of the two was complementary, Manilal created the atmosphere in which Andrews could be accepted with trust and without suspicion or reservation. In turn Andrews was able to give publicity to those grievances against which Manilal was agitating.

In the field of politics Manilal's greatest contribution lay in instigating Indians to seek representation in the Legislative Council. Thus a number of Indians from all the major centres in Viti Levu petitioned the Governor that Manilal ought to be nominated as the Indian representative. According to the Governor the petitioners were men of 'some standing in the community'. Their petition bears quotation because it illustrates Indian reasons for the request:

1. That we Indians have no member to represent us in the Legislative Council.
2. That we understand that other British Colonies such as Trinidad, British Guiana and Mauritius have given Indians representation in their Councils.
3. In the Legislative Council of Fiji even the Fijians have their two representatives and there seems to us to be no reason why the Indians who are more intelligent than the former, should not be represented.
4. The Indians have proved themselves loyal and law abiding subjects of the British Empire and if an Indian representative is added to the Legislative Council he will be of service in the administration of local affairs.

The information about the other colonies was certainly supplied by Manilal but was inaccurate. There were no Indians in the Council of British Guiana; they were eligible for election but hitherto had been unsuccessful. Perhaps most revealing was the arrogant attitude towards the Fijians. The prejudice sprang from ignorance resulting from a lack of contact between the two races. Nonetheless the response to the petition was favourable though the Governor was quick to restate that Indian interests were as well catered for as they would have been if an Indian were in the Legislative Council. If an Indian with the necessary qualification could be found the Governor was

51 Sweet-Escott to C.O.235, 12 July 1915; C.O.83/126.
52 Encl. ibid.
prepared to make the nomination but it was premature for such an appointment. But if the Indian Government favoured the granting of the petition he would not object. The Colonial Office submitted the petition to India Office for comment with the reservation that difficulty might be had in finding suitable local Indians for the task. There was no deception in this, but the dearth existed because of government neglect in providing facilities for Indian education. It was decided by the Colonial Office that despite the justification for the petition no action ought to be taken immediately unless pressure came for it from the India Office.

This was indicative of a pattern. Indians in the Colony could be ignored and their requests shelved indefinitely. But if there was pressure from the India Office, then it had to be considered, if not satisfied. In its own turn the India Office planned its strategy according to exigencies in India and its moves were dictated by the advice of the rulers of the sub-continent. In other words the fate of overseas Indians in such matters depended on India itself. If their aspirations threatened the British raj, if for instance, Indian public opinion championed their cause, and had to be placated then the despatch writers would be quick to pass the message to the India Office which would then bring pressures to bear by various means and degrees on the Colonial Office to alleviate the situation. If, on the other hand, nothing disrupted the tenor of the India Office or if the Colonial Office decided to turn a deaf ear or resort to delaying tactics then remedy might be distant or not forthcoming. And indeed on this occasion it was the India Office, acting on the suggestion of the Government of India, which transmitted to the Colonial Office the advice to provide Indian representation in the Fiji Legislative Council. Once the Indian Government had been informed of the correspondence it noted that the Fiji Letters Patent did not provide for the nomination of unofficial members whether Indian or European although the latter could vote and be candidates for the Legislative Council, while other races were debarred from this

54 C.S.O. 588/L/15.
55 ibid.
56 I.O. to C.O., 30 March 1916; C.O. 83/134.
privilege so that 'it would appear that Indians in Fiji are under a political disability to which they are not subject in any other colonies which recruit Indian labour'. The removal of this disability was demanded but it was added that parity with Fijian representation would not be insisted upon since there would be difficulty in finding a suitable person. The Indian Government was realistic in its approach:

Moreover in the present state of education among the Indian immigrants, it appears that nothing more than a theoretical equality would be secured by throwing elections open to them, nor do the petitioners themselves ask that they should be admitted to the privilege of taking their chance at the polls. It recommended that the Governor have power to nominate an Indian who possessed all the qualifications, except for the racial ones, required by Articles 15 and 20 of the Fiji Letters Patent of 31 January 1914. At the same time it realised that this would make Manilal, who was not a British subject, ineligible.

The Colonial Office informed the Governor that instead of eleven officials he might appoint twelve, of whom eleven were to hold public offices while the twelfth was to be an Indian British subject not in public service. If such a person could not be found then the position was to be left vacant. Such a step raised the all-important question of precedence in the Legislative Council. As a sort of 'official', the nominated Indian would have priority over both the European elected members and the two Fijian members. Secondly if he voted with the non-officials it would reduce, though not destroy, the government majority. But the first problem had to be solved. Both Europeans and Fijians would resent any such precedence over them and it was resolved that the Indian nominated member should come after them.

With Manilal disqualified and not recommended by either of them, the Colonial Office did not expect the Governor to find a suitable person for some time. Therefore it was with some surprise that the Governor's despatch was received in January 1917 stating that he hoped

57 ibid.
58 ibid.
59 C.O. to Sweet-Escott Conf. 8 Aug. 1916; C.O.83/134.
60 C.O.Minutes Sweet-Escott to C.O.362, 1 Dec. 1916; C.O.83/133.
to report by next mail that he had appointed 'a native of India, of good position' to the newly-created seat. The Colonial Office saw no need to convey this to the India Office until the Governor had made the selection. Moreover a fait accompli prevented India Office from making any recommendations of its own.

Governor Sweet-Escott selected Badri Mahraj for the honour, a name that had been suggested to him no doubt by officials, and other Europeans in social contact with them, during his last visit to the Lautoka and Ba districts. In this process of 'king-making' the Agent-General of Immigration, R.M. Booth, played the role of furnishing the Governor with information for the purpose. But Booth had never met the candidate and all he knew was that Badri had two sons at Wanganui College in New Zealand; his solicitor Robert Crompton maintained that he had no difficulty in paying the school fees, estimated at about £350 p.a. When the Governor met Badri on 27 November at Government House he was disappointed at his knowledge of English but was 'satisfied that he is as suitable a candidate for a seat in the Legislative Council as a representative of Indian interests as can be found at the present time'. The Governor had already made up his mind, and any shortcomings of his choice could be explained away.

Badri Dutt had been born in the village of Bamanli in the district of Garhwal son of Pundit Reshi Rasu, an astrologer of repute. He was not a Brahmin but a Chattri. The suffix 'Mahraj' which was a title given to Brahmins was bestowed upon Badri in Fiji. He was a hard-working man who had arrived in Fiji in 1890 as an indentured labourer and begun work with the Melbourne Trust Ltd in Penang for 5/6 a week. He commuted his indenture after three years but continued on the sugar estate there. Being literate he was transferred to the

61 Sweet-Escott to C.O.370, 20 Dec.1916; C.0.83/133; C.S.O.9633/16.
62 C.S.0.7310/16.
63 R.M.Booth to Col.Sec., 8 Nov.1916 Encl. Sweet-Escott to C.O.370, 20 Dec. 1916; C.0.83/133.
64 Sweet-Escott to C.O.370, 20 Dec. 1916; C.0.83/133.
65 Calman 1952:95.
66 Sweet-Escott to C.O.370, 20 Dec. 1916; C.0.83/133.
blacksmith's shop to keep records of equipment, and by his own interest and effort learnt that trade as well. Eventually he became the Company's blacksmith. From a European, F. Burness, he obtained land which he cultivated while still working for the sugar company. In 1900 he took over 4,000 acres for 10/- at an annual rental of £40; of these 500 acres were cultivable and the rest was for grazing. By 1914 he had 300 tenants, who paid no rent for a few years until the land had been broken. Moreover, in 1894 he had started the first school for Indians in a Fijian bure and at the time of his nomination he was still involved in this task. Judging by his action in sending his sons abroad for education he was among the first of his race in Fiji to accept its value for advancement. His involvement in education and his generosity to his tenants would have been sufficient to have won praise for him from his community. When he rose to the employer class he adopted its argument that the indenture system was not beyond reform. Yet he early showed qualities that separated him from other men. In this sense he was already an emerging leader if not an established one, before the arrival in Fiji of Manilal. He was certainly conversant with the needs and grievances of his race. Perhaps because he had done well he may not have been sympathetic to all their complaints. Like other self-made men he may not have been tolerant of those who dissipated more energy in self-pity than in improving their status.

In the 1916 harvesting season he expected his land to yield 2,000 tons of sugar cane which would bring him about £1,500. No other criterion was necessary to measure his success. The official opinion in the district was:

Badri is a man of good character; well spoken of by Europeans who have had business transactions with him and is highly respected by his countrymen over whom he has considerable influence.

I believe Badri is to a great extent a self-taught man. He has very fair colloquial knowledge of English, reads it a little but beyond signing his name I cannot say he writes it. He both reads and writes Hindi and has some knowledge of Sanscrit. He is a

68 ibid.
strong advocate in favour of education. He has been instrumental in opening up a school for Indian lads at Vatiritiri and it is mainly through his personal interest and financial support that it has been kept going. He has also subscribed £50 towards the funds of the Indian School it is proposed to open at Lautoka.

Badri is without doubt the best fitted of any Indian I know for a seat in the Legislative Council, he is intelligent, and broad-minded and progressive in his views. He is highly respected by and has undoubted influence over his compatriots. 70

Better still he had been of assistance to the Government on more than one occasion. At the outbreak of war in 1914 his vigilance had been useful in thwarting a European merchant, Ragg, from purchasing all available stocks of rice in Ra, in order to have a monopoly and dictate prices when shortage occurred.71 Badri it was who alerted officials in his area to Ragg's design and the Government was thus able to take appropriate action in time, averting possible black-marketeering.

Opposition to Badri Mahraj emerged before his appointment and it came from an unexpected quarter. The Fiji Times in an editorial argued that the Government was proposing to nominate an Indian to the Legislative Council so that it might 'with righteousness pride itself of having accorded political representation to the large Indian population of Fiji'.72 It went on that it had been rumoured that 'one Badri Mahraj, a wealthy but uneducated Indian of Penang' was to be the choice and if this was true then:

the intelligent Indians in our midst have been cruelly insulted, and they should rise in a body and protest against such injustice. The whole thing is a hollow sham, and it would need but a child to see through the tissue-paper veil which the Government have weaved over this affair.

The Indian representative is to be permitted to freely voice the Indian grievances, but if an uneducated man is appointed, he will naturally take his cue from the Governor, and, in short, will sit on the Council as a Governmental marionette. The two native members are ridiculous dummies, but the appointment of an uneducated Indian member will be even more ridiculous.

70 ibid.
71 ibid.
72 Fiji Times, 1 Dec. 1916.
As there was no competent and educated person fit for that task in Fiji, someone from India could be brought out and if he did not have to be an Indian then perhaps C.F. Andrews might be considered. But if the Governor had Badri in mind then it ought to be honest and eliminate the proposal. Next a letter appeared in the same paper agreeing that the selection of the uneducated Badri would be an insult to the Indian community and proposing Manilal as an alternative. Again strangely the _Fiji Times_ responded by saying that if the choice were to be confined to Fiji then Manilal was the only suitable person. Another correspondent thought that no one was less suitable than Manilal. This brought forth a letter in defence of Manilal and the statement that he did not court such an appointment and actually favoured V.M. Pillay of Lautoka for the position. The same correspondent thought some ex-interpreter would be better or even Rev. Nunn, Rev. Steadman or Rev. Piper. Despite these comments there was no major storm in the press on the issue. Generally the Europeans appeared apathetic and most Indians were incapable of writing letters in English. The Governor's choice was officially gazetted on 22 December and this resulted in yet another condemnatory editorial in the _Fiji Times_. From seventy-nine Indians, mainly from Suva, a petition had been sent to the Governor before he publicly announced his nominee stating that though the right to nominate their representative rested with His Excellency and they themselves were unfit for the task, they felt of the very few educated Indians among them, Manilal was the most suitable. From Nadi came a similar request. The preference of Badri Mahraj over Manilal certainly did not stir a storm anything like the one that was to rage in 1920 when a restriction order forced the latter to quit Fiji. How the Indian community precisely felt is difficult to assess but the _Indian Settler_ perhaps summed up the manner of

73 _F.T._ 2 Dec. 1916.
74 _F.T._ 6 Dec. 1916.
75 _F.T._ 9 Dec. 1916.
78 C.S.O. 9946/16.
majority acceptance:

The choice of Mr Badri Mahraj, of Penang, Fiji to a seat in the Legislative Council, as a representative of the Indian peopulation of this Colony, appears to us a wise one. The hon. gentleman strikes us a keen business man, and one not likely to be led away by half-educated members of the community, who would very much like to make use of the honourable member in stirring up strife where a full enquiry will elucidate matters. We have had more than one interview with the Hon. Badri Mahraj, and we are more than pleased to note the quiet, unobtrusive manner in which he listens to his more noisy associate in a complaint, and finally suggests it would be better to form a judgement after a thorough inquiry than to complicate matters by a too hasty publicity. We feel sure that the honourable gentleman will be of great assistance to us, his countrymen, and the Colony in general. We are aware that it is not always the one who talks too much that gets listened to with feeling. 79

The question remains whether Badri Mahraj was fit to represent his people. In answer, it must first be considered whether there were alternatives. Manilal was the obvious alternative but he was unacceptable to the Government. In Council he would have too frequently stirred the hornets' nest and brought the swarm about the Government's ear. He had come to Fiji to practise law and provide leadership and he had a reputation of being an agitator in Mauritius where he had spoken out boldly for Indians and come into conflict with the authorities. Had he been in the Legislative Council the pattern would have been repeated and the Government itself would have been responsible for providing him with a public platform to air his views. Government action would have elevated him officially as the Indian leader and once this was done it would have had to pay heed to his voice. Already his branding of indenture as slavery ran counter to official and European attitudes. Therefore to have expected the Governor to nominate Manilal was unrealistic. Moreover the official representative of Indian affairs was the Agent-General of Immigration and the Governor could not appoint anyone who might get the better of this man in debates on Indian issues and prove more knowledgeable. The Governor could only choose someone who would work under the aegis of this official protector, run to him for advice and occasionally make suggestions to him which, if ignored, would not lead to open confrontation. The nomination of an Indian member was

not meant to usher in an era of drastic revision of the regime's Indian policy, in so far as one existed. The act was designated to grant the bare substance of the demand, not its soul. Hence the nominee had to be one from whom the Government could obtain cooperation, one who might easily accept official interpretation of events (as Badri did on the indenture system and industrial strife). He had to be one dependent on the Government rather than capable of independent assertion.

Of the others, there was V.M. Pillay, a Lautoka shopkeeper, who had arrived in the Colony with capital before 1914 and was supposed to have been the recommendation of Manilal. In 1921 the Governor was to choose him for the abortive commission to enquire into the grievances of the strikers. But even then he was deemed unsuitable by his compatriots. His final end was bankruptcy through bad management of his business. 80

Another aspirant was Peter Grant who spoke English well. But he was a Christian, a minority group in the Indian community. Besides he was not a popular man and suspected of partiality towards the regime by his compatriots. 81 Equally unsatisfactory might have been the choice of a European Christian missionary. These men frequently had prejudices which would have prevented an adequate appreciation of the Indian point of view. 82 Their first station in life was service to the Wesleyan Mission and the axiom that no man can serve two masters was as applicable to them as to anyone else. Their ultimate goal was Christianization, and they were bound to show favouritism, as they did, towards those who had washed in their baptismal waters. A population predominantly Hindu and Muslim, determined to remain so through fire and water, could not be represented in Council by men who had dedicated their life to subverting their religion and culture.

80 Gillion 1962:134.
81 Oral Evidence.
82 Burton (1910) wrote in his Preface: 'Today there are over 40,000 Indians settled in these islands. Cargoes of the frankest 'heathenism' come every year, and thus the numbers grow by leaps and bounds. What does this mean to the Christian Church here? It means that unless tremendous and sustained effort is put forth, the sign of the Cross will be displaced by the Hindu trident and Mohammedan Crescent.'
To have brought someone out from India would not have been practical. He would have taken time to become acquainted with local conditions. Even C.F. Andrews might not have been suitable. His close association with Gandhi would have rendered him suspect in the eyes of the Government and the Europeans. Secondly, there would have been too much of a tendency to link events in Fiji with India and vice versa, to the disadvantage of Fiji Indians who needed to find a place for themselves in their new home instead of clinging to what they had chosen to leave. The Fiji Indians needed greater identification with Fiji and a nominee from India would have been an obstacle to this great prerequisite to their acceptance in the Colony. The Fiji Indians would have been seen as an inseparable part of India; this would have prolonged the habit of regarding him as an immigrant rather than a permanent settler in Fiji.

It was essential that the nominee be an Indian and be of Fiji, not a transient but a permanent dweller, one who had made his choice (unlike Manilal at this stage) and saw Fiji as his home. And it was preferable that he bear some connection, direct or by descent, with the indenture system as most Indians in Fiji did. Moreover as most Indians in Fiji at the time were rural dwellers involved in the cultivation of the land, it was also preferable that the privileged man be one who understood their ways and needs, instead of an urban professional who might assume their wants and whose way of thinking was foreign to them. He ought to be a man who might appreciate the vacillations of their fortunes and seek to remedy them for their own sake, not a person who might capitalize on their misery and exploit it for political goals which to the cultivator meant no alleviation of suffering. Under the circumstances then the choice of Badri Mahraj, ex-indentured labourer, farmer and landowner, was perhaps better than continued denial of representation of Indians by an Indian. He may not have read law books or any books in English, but he was sufficiently coherent in that tongue to make himself understood. Besides, in the entrenched Crown Colony system where the will of the official majority always prevailed the loud pleas of an English-educated lawyer could be as easily overruled and ignored as the whispers of the rustic barely able to speak the English language. The tumult of words could easily antagonize reluctant guardians while
the quiet request might find sympathy. And the Indian plight at the
time needed sympathy more than anything else.

When Badri Mahraj was nominated Indians were regarded essentially
as labourers; the indenture system still prevailed. They were
considered indispensable as labourers and both officialdom and settlers
felt that this in fact ought to remain their function. Hence the
franchise was not to be considered for them an absolute right. Under
their existing status it could not be bestowed upon them when the
Fijians, whose interests were deemed paramount, remained without it.
And the Indians were neither sufficiently literate nor organized with
a unified voice to clamour for it.
THE INDIAN PROBLEM

The first effective recommendation that Indians be granted the franchise did not originate either at Government House, Suva or in Whitehall. It was suggested by one, C.W. Doorly, who had been Fiji Government Emigration Agent in India and was sensitive to the trend of events there. He wrote to a Colonial Office official who had sought his advice on the labour question:

My knowledge of the opinions held by leaders of native public opinion in India has forced me to the definite conclusion that no scheme for the future emigration of Indians to Fiji will be accepted unless it assures to all Indians in the Colony full political rights. 1

This was at a time when it was certain that indentured labourers would no longer be available for Fiji (only the exact date of abolition remained to be determined) and it was thought imperative for the Colony's solvency to continue emigration from India in some form.

On the same day that Doorly's letter arrived at the Colonial Office, Thomas Hughes, the C.S.R. Company's roving ambassador on the labour issue, told an official in the Colonial Office that Indian politicians had been favourably disposed towards British Guiana because of its elective institutions and the presence of Mr Luckoo, an Indian elected member in that colony's delegation, had had an excellent influence. If Fiji could have two elected Indians in its Council then the effect would be equally beneficial. 2 But Green, a senior Whitehall official, minuted that in British Guiana there was a common electorate for whites, negroes and Indians whereas in Fiji the Europeans would never consent to an electorate with a coloured majority. Besides, two representatives for 60,000 Indians as opposed to six for 5,000 Europeans would constitute 'an obvious disability for the former'. He advised that they suggest to the Governor of Fiji that if he recommended it, the Secretary of State would authorize the amendment of that country's constitution to enable the election of two Indians to its Legislative Council.

1 Doorly to Green, Private, 11 Nov. 1919; C.O.83/1h9.
2 Minutes. ibid.
Hughes had also spoken on the same subject to Sir Henry Lambert, permanent head of the Colonial Office. Lambert minuted:

Mr Hughes spoke to me about this and it certainly seems to me an effective piece of shop window dressing to offer say a couple of elected seats to Indians. I don't want to be cynical, but I don't think it really matters what the franchise, since the Indians are quite incapable for the most part of exercising it properly. On this ground the broadest manhood suffrage would be best. But local conditions must largely determine this.

To this, the Under Secretary of State, Amery added:

I don't think we can have Indians on the same electorate and would suggest a separate electorate with a reasonably wide franchise as proposed and bring officials up to 12.

These views were embodied in a telegram sent on 21 November to the Governor of Fiji.

From the Colonial Office views mentioned above two points emerge. First, the elective principle was not accorded because the Indian deserved it or was entitled to it, nor was it to be a privilege extended to a subject race. Its design was to entice Indian politicians into agreeing to the emigration of their countrymen as labourers to Fiji. Secondly, the franchise was to be communal in recognition of likely European opposition to having Indian voters in their own electorate. These initial decisions, especially the second, became increasingly important as the negotiations between Fiji, India and London followed a long and tortuous course full of argument and disagreement before the franchise became a reality for the Indian people in the Pacific colony.

The response of Governor Rodwell was favourable. He was certain that the European elected members would support political rights for Indians and there would be no difficulty in working out

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3 ibid.
4 ibid.
5 The telegram read: 'Doorly holds opinion that unless Indians have political rights, any scheme of Indian emigration will be unacceptable. He suggests that Indian community should elect two or more representatives to Legislative Council. I am impressed by advice as to effect on Indian opinion of franchise in British Guiana. I would agree to two members being elected by Indians if you should so recommend. In order to safeguard official majority add another two representatives. Separate Indian electorate with fairly wide franchise would seem desirable. Please consider whether an offer of this kind could be made to Indian Government and report by telegram.' C.O. to Rodwell, Tel. 21 Nov. 1919; C.0.83/149.
6 Rodwell to C.O. Tel. 29 Nov. 1919; C.0.83/149.
the qualifications for electors and candidates even though these
needed serious consideration. In his mind too the question of a
guaranteed labour supply dominated. At that time he was hoping that
the indenture system would remain till the end of the following March
because the independent planters were still dismayed and anxious
about financial losses, though the C.S.R. Company with greater
resources was reconciled to abolition at the end of the year. But
the planters too were prepared to accept this date if it was the only
means of getting more Indian labourers. Because of the extreme
importance of the labour question to Fiji, Rodwell wanted the
Government of India to discuss the subject with the unofficial Fiji
mission comprising the Colonial Treasurer, Rankine, and the Anglican
Bishop in Polynesia.

The pressure of forces in India demanding immediate abolition
proved greater than the objections of planters in Fiji seeking time in
order to minimize financial losses. All indentures were cancelled
from the first day of 1920. To those, like Europeans in Fiji, who
maintained that advantages in the indenture system outweighed
disadvantages, its end meant a concession to Indian opinion which
henceforth was expected to show gratitude for such magnanimity. One
system had been decreed unfit for continuation, but another had to be
found to ensure that Indian labour flowed to Fiji's shores. India
held the key and there was no sense in offending it provided it did
not demand an unreasonable price. With this consideration before them,
the members of the Fiji Executive Council approved that on
9 January 1920 the Governor should publicly announce the franchise for
Indians to come into effect at a later date on the basis of two
Indian members to be elected by their own race.

But on 15 January 1920 Indian labourers employed by the Government
and the Suva Municipal Council went on strike demanding higher wages.
The strike spread to Nausori and Navua where it affected labourers in
the sugar industry. It also extended to Levuka for a short duration.

7 ibid.
8 ibid.
9 Minutes Ex. Co. 6 Jan. 1920. C.A.

Essentially it was inspired by economic conditions, wages had failed to keep pace with rising prices. But as the strike continued (it ended abruptly on 16 February) it acquired political and racial overtones. On 11, 12 and 13 February in isolated incidents, law and order broke down though disorder did not prevail in the strike districts as a whole. In one case, in Samabula, an Indian died when the police fired to disperse an angry crowd. The strike had a traumatic effect; Indians became more uncertain of their position while Europeans hitherto unanimous in their demands for more Indian labourers felt a need for caution. The strike also divided the Indian community. Certain groups, especially some Indian Christians, stood apart from the rest of their compatriots and sided with the Government.

Also because of his role in encouraging Indians to strike and in adopting an overall political stance, Manilan was forced to leave Fiji. The Government was indignant; Rodwell publicly stated: 'As to the strike and the accompanying disorders, the former was unjustifiable and the latter were criminal and injurious to every interest.' A Government Commission appointed to inquire into the cost of living claimed that prices had risen by 100% when the town labourers' wages had increased from 2/- in 1910 to 2/6 in 1919. Yet more important for our study, the Governor minuted that as a consequence of the dispute action on Indian political rights had been deliberately deferred because their behaviour in certain districts indicated that the time was not opportune. The whole subject was to be reviewed on the return of the unofficial Fiji delegation from India and if India raised queries about political rights it was to be informed that the dislocation caused by the strike had deprived the Government of an opportunity to consider it further.

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10 Based on oral evidence.
11 Oral evidence.
13 Mayer 1963:37.
14 Minutes, Rodwell, 11 May 1920; C.A.I/14.
15 ibid. C.A.I/15.
In India itself, the unofficial deputation of the Bishop in Polynesia and Mr Rankine met obstacles rather than success and prospects for emigration to Fiji appeared dim. Indian leaders were not well-disposed to their compatriots' emigrating merely to become servants of European masters opposed to their raising themselves to equal political status or to competition in commerce.\textsuperscript{16} Despite the delegation's objections and explanation, the guarantee of political rights for Indians as offered by British Guiana was being sought from Fiji as well. The Government of India wrote to the Fiji delegation on 19 March 1920 and asked that Fiji guarantee for Indians by an ordinance, equal rights with other communities residing there.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, India was prepared to accept the franchise which allowed the election of two Indians by members of their community. If Fiji were prepared to give the guarantee, then India would send a deputation to examine the possibility of emigration to Fiji as well as the adequacy of wages.\textsuperscript{18} The Government of Fiji was prepared to oblige and the European elected members and the Council of Planters consented.\textsuperscript{19} Thus Fiji signified its willingness to carry out its side of the bargain. And despite the events of 1920, the Governor, though angry with the Indians for the nature of their retaliation, was quick to admit that a gulf did exist between the rulers and the ruled and that the former were out of touch with the latter. To remedy this he asked the Secretary of State to sanction the appointment of two advisers whose duties would be to keep in touch with Indian and Fijian native feeling throughout the Colony, to advise Government on political questions and to visit districts with a view to securing uniformity in policy among district officers but without usurping the executive function of the latter.\textsuperscript{20}

For the Fijian part an officer was available locally but for the

\textsuperscript{16} Rankine 2 and 5 Apr. 1920. Encl. Rodwell to C.O. Conf. 30 June 1920; C.O. 83/151 and 1 July 1920; C.O. 83/152.

\textsuperscript{17} C.S.O. 985/27; C.P. 15/27. The full report without the deletions for its publication as C.P. 15/27 can be found as an enclosure in C.O. to O.A.G. Conf. 30 March 1925.

\textsuperscript{18} Minutes, I.O. to C.O. 11 Feb. 1921; C.O. 83/159.

\textsuperscript{19} Raju Report: i.

\textsuperscript{20} Rodwell to C.O. Conf. Tel. 21 July 1920. As a result a Secretary for Indian Affairs was appointed in 1927.
Indians one was sought from the Indian Civil Service on the recommendation of the Indian Government. In the Colonial Office, the request was viewed with sympathy and sanctioned, though there were doubts whether anyone could be obtained from India. What is noteworthy is that the Government in Fiji, even if its motives might have been to procure labour, as they definitely were on the franchise issue, was recognizing the need to understand the Indian by establishing a communication link with him. That a similar attitude was evident concerning the Fijians indicates that the intention was to prevent outbreaks like the January-February strike. The Governor's plan implied a change in the overall place of the Indian in Fiji, with the inference that he was no longer just an immigrant labourer but a permanent citizen whose grievances had to be investigated and where possible alleviated. The franchise itself implied citizenship, or did it? The answer might be found in a discussion of the Davson Report.

On 25 August 1920 the Governor appointed a Commission to make recommendations on Indian representation. It held three public meetings, two in Suva and one in Lautoka, but the response was meagre, despite wide publicity and an invitation to the public to give evidence. In addition to voluntary witnesses the Commission obtained information and suggestions from others it summoned. The poor response was due essentially to the lack of education and literacy within the community. The strike, the reaction of the other races to it, and the departure of the Manilals during the year, had all been too recent for the Indians; they were left dazed, unable to prepare for the Commission. The exit of D.M.Manilal left the community leaderless and seemingly apathetic, especially in Suva. But this did not mean that Indians were indifferent to political representation at this stage. It had already been decided that Indians ought to have members in the Legislative Council, all the Commission had to do was recommend who should choose and be chosen and how this might be done.

21 C.O. to Rodwell Tel. 30 July 1920. Lambert minuted the Governor's telegram: 'Neither the Fijian mind, nor the Indian mind, is intelligible to the ordinary white man and if the Governor feels in the dark (as he probably did when the riots broke out) he is entitled to expect assistance.'

The Commission decided to accept a knowledge of English or any of five Indian dialects for eligibility to vote, though a candidate was required to have a sound knowledge of English because this was essential to the understanding of the proceedings of the Council. For voters the stipulated literacy qualification was thought essential because it enabled them to exercise their ballot secretly. Property qualifications were to be half those fixed for Europeans. The two Indians were to be chosen from a colony-wide constituency though the Commission advised that if at some later stage the number of Indian representatives was increased to three then the Colony would without difficulty be divided into three electorates.

Along with the report of the Commission the minutes of evidence were also published. Since there is no other material available on what the Indians thought on the issue, the minutes bear examination in order to obtain some picture of their views or at least, a section of the community.

Where discussion occurs on the question of qualifications for the franchise, it becomes apparent that divisions, both class and communal, existed within the community. There was a consensus that property, income and literacy tests (although these were to be in one of the vernacular dialects) should be considered before granting the franchise to an individual. There was no universal call that all Indians above a certain age should be permitted to vote. There was awareness that the literacy tests would severely restrict the vote. Whereas the Commission as a whole was unprepared to state what percentage of the Indian population was literate, according to S.S. Chowla, a civil servant, and Swami Saraswati, a Hindu priest, it ranged from 10% to 15%. The South Indians sent in a letter of protest when they heard rumours that only those with property or leaseholds of at least 10 acres would be eligible to vote. They stated that most of the Indians in the Colony were poor and would thus remain disfranchised. But their letter also betrayed linguistic-
The Calcuttans who arrived in the Colony many years before the Madrasis, and also a number of Punjabis who came as passengers, possess property and wealth, while the poor Madrasis who came only a few years back possess neither wealth nor property. There are many illiterate among the Calcuttans and Punjabis to whom a lecture is given who can neither understand nor grasp the purport of it, and if they are asked to vote for anything they will at once give their vote without knowing for whom they have voted.

Equally, the Agent-General of Immigration, Backhouse, one of the Commissioners, told a witness that where northern Indians dominated and the southerners were in a minority, the former would swamp the latter if the question arose of choosing representatives for a panchayat. The differences were not new, their origins were as old as India itself and were introduced into Fiji by the immigrants themselves. Their nature was such that they might remain submerged only till the time when a clash of interests arose; then they would surface. They needed to be recognized and emphasized not only because they affected local politics, but also because in analyses of colonial political situations there is a tendency to stress discrimination between black and white, and to ignore or minimize racial and other differences between black and black and within each black society.

There were also strong class boundaries. A correspondent from Ba wrote that cane-growers hated labourers; if the former alone were permitted to vote then the latter would suffer. This was voiced before the cane strike of the following year when some Indian employers were adversely affected but apparently sided with their compatriots. This collaboration may have been necessitated by the fact that the Indian growers had no other alternative at a time when animosity towards the whole Indian community ran high. Between the propertied and the non-propertied Indians in Fiji the relationship has always been characterized by condescension and contempt on one side and distrust and envy on the other. The 'have-nots' have never been particularly reluctant to air their knowledge of the methods whereby the 'haves' reached that status and the remark of District Officer Henry Pilling that 'it is rather a sign of a good Indian not to own a great deal of property' is not totally without
foundation.24 One class of Indians regarding themselves better than another was not confined to Indians themselves; it was accepted by Europeans including the officials. And on the franchise issue that element which had to arrogate to itself the description of the better or elevated group thought it was deserving of some form of citizenship.25 An interpreter who advocated an income qualification of £120 p.a. recognized that this would exclude a very large number and added that he did not think that a locomotive driver or mill-worker was fit to vote. A race whose tradition sanctified caste remained always aware of distinctions between men and some always aspired to be elevated above others. Moreover, when governed by rulers who regarded class with no less sanctity, differences of education, property and income, received excessive attention and the barriers that resulted were often defended and perpetuated with vigour by the over-lord and vassal alike.

One disruptive factor which gathered force later was obviously of little consequence at this stage. There was no evidence of Hindu-Muslim conflict nor of the people of either faith demanding separate representation. The Muslim priest, calling himself President of the Anjuman-i-Hidayat-ul-Islam (Muslim Teaching Society), submitted a petition with four Hindus and sought the recognition of English, Urdu, Hindi, Gurmukhi and Madrasi for qualification to vote.26 In fact, the priest favoured the adoption, with adaptation, of a very Hindu institution, the panchayat. And that Muslims be recognized as a voting entity in contradistinction to all others was suggested by a Hindu, S.S. Chowla, who based his submission on practices then prevalent in India. With only two members to be elected it would have been impracticable and grossly disproportionate to allocate one seat to the Muslims. But it seems that the Muslims did not seek political separation from the rest of their race. Had political differences in Fiji been rife at this stage Muslims would have sought some guarantee of their position as they did later irrespective of

24 C.S.O. 718/21.
25 ibid.
26 ibid.
their numbers vis-à-vis others in the community. This apparent harmony reflects the Hindu-Muslim rapprochement in India at the time. The Davson Commission sat before the Khilafat honeymoon ended in divorce between the nationalists of the two religions in the sub-continent.

An issue on which some disagreement existed was whether government officers should be permitted to vote and stand as candidates. The Commission was emphatically against Indian civil servants receiving this privilege which was denied their European counterparts, and the decision was reached before public witnesses were examined.27 Many Indians who appeared before the Commission, including one of the leading civil servants, S.S. Chowla, argued that this class of Indians was certainly amongst the best educated in their community, which should not be deprived of their services in the political sphere. However, N.B. Mitter, from Nadi, President of the Indian Association and Headmaster of a government school, claimed that a large number of Indians was against government officials being enfranchised. A Fiji-born court interpreter also expressed to the Commissioners in Lautoka his opposition to Chowla and those of like opinion on this particular subject. The relationship between Indian officials and their community is a complex one; it varied with individuals and situations and any generalization about it would be an over-simplification. But accepting this risk, one could say that the officials, especially court interpreters with their superficial but useful knowledge of the law and the processes of litigation, were conscious of their power. In a case where a defendant was illiterate and the magistrate and lawyers unable to speak or understand his vernacular tongue, an interpreter could sway the balance between acquittal and conviction. Unscrupulous interpreters were no less grasping than the ruthless sirdars of the indenture days. For their part, the uneducated Indians resented and feared Indian officials whose word could send them to prison or deprive them of a plot of land. Like all devotees, they resented gods that needed continual propitiation and whose hunger seemed insatiable. But as most of the people who came before the Commission were educated or in positions of influence they pressed for the franchise of civil

27 ibid.
servants because they shared a similarity of interests with them.

There was consensus that the representatives to be chosen should be Indians. However, the Rev. W. R. Steadman of the Methodist Mission suggested that if Indians wished, they should elect a European. His colleague, Richard Piper, went even further and wrote that Indians would be best served by 'one, or even two, Englishmen with a good knowledge of the Indian people and sympathetically interested in their legitimate aspirations'. He admitted, nonetheless, that any such person would have to present himself before an Indian electorate for selection. There was in reality no likelihood of Indians as a whole preferring a European to one of their own kind. What such a person might regard as 'legitimate aspirations' of Indians would certainly be inadequate for the community he was representing. Finally such a provision under the circumstances would threaten to breed ill-will. A European defeated in an election, in which the Indians might solidly prefer a man of their own race might find solace in blame and bitterness. Such a result might be interpreted as an exhibition of anti-European sentiments and Indian abhorrence of another race.

Most of the discussion centred around the method of choosing the Indian members. Again before the public hearings began the Commissioners had discussed the matter in camera and had come out strongly in favour of direct representation. There was strong support from Indians for the use of the panchayat or its adaptation; Chowla called it a 'village electoral board'. The Commissioners and witnesses and correspondents such as Steadman, Piper, A.A. Wright, N.B. Mitter and Bere Singh all thought the institution impracticable or unsuitable for the purpose. Piper characteristically, without fear of being left out on a limb, regarded a separate Indian electorate as a temporary expedient eventually to be replaced by a general roll of all electors as Indians qualified 'by good character, education and responsibility'. His was a lone voice and even if such a recommendation had been taken seriously it would have been certainly opposed by H.M. Scott. In the course of the first in camera meeting he had expressed opposition to any possibility of an increase from

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28 ibid.
two to three representatives. As for the *panchayat*, the lack of homogeneity of caste or religion in a particular settlement would lead to dissatisfaction with the choice and would result in faction fighting. But there were even graver reasons than these for its unsuitability, as the District Commissioner of Labasa, A.A. Wright, concluded after weighing its advantages and disadvantages:

The primary election or selection of voters would not be secret, and the local moneylender, shopkeeper, or landholder would have an unfair hold over his creditors or sub-tenants as the case might be. His interests would not be the same, nor would his views and aims be the same as those of the individuals who were compelled to select him as a voter.

The Commissioners' report was tabled in April 1921 and it appeared that the Indians would have the vote if not citizenship by the next election in 1923. There was some doubt about citizenship because the Chairman told his colleagues at the outset that their work was simply a question of who was to have a vote and the context of his statement contained the clear inference that citizenship was a separate issue, something with which they were not concerned at the time. But before any action would be taken the Government of India, pressed by the Indians in the Viceroy's Council intervened once more, and delay and prolonged wrangling was the consequence. Nothing concerning Indians in Fiji could be finalized without the imprimatur of India. And though this invigilation had its advantages, it stood in the way of quick settlements and desirable compromise.

The new attitude of the Government of India was partly a product of outside consideration. Since the public announcement in Fiji of the granting of electoral franchise to Indians, the Government of India had urged a common electoral roll, comprising Indians and Europeans, for Kenya. This principle now dominated that Government's thinking. There was also an important delay; India was unable to make a definite pronouncement until the report of its deputation to Fiji was received. The Colonial Office, angered that the Government of India was now delaying the introduction of Indian representation in

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29 ibid.

30 I.O. to C.O. 28 June 1921; C.O. 83/159.
Fiji along lines which it had previously endorsed in a letter to the Bishop in Polynesia, regarded that Government's interference in the domestic affairs of Fiji as overweening and intolerable.  

In reply India preferred postponement and the common roll. The Colonial Office was dismayed. Though it asserted that to admit interference from an undecided Indian Government at this stage could mean uncertainty and indecision in the future, reality was also faced. Fiji wanted Indian immigrants and if the price was mollification of India this would have to be paid.

Two despatches were sent to Fiji on the subject, one numbered, the other confidential. The first advised consent to the request for deferment and conveyed India's preference for common franchise. It also referred to the 1921 Imperial Conference which had felt that in the interests of the solidarity of the British Commonwealth it is desirable that the rights of such Indians/as those overseas/to citizenship should be recognized.

In confidence, the Officer Administering the Government in Fiji was informed that Indians would interpret the resolution of the Imperial Conference as entitling their race to uniform franchise with Europeans in Fiji. Hence:

You will, of course, realise that the Resolution, although it contemplates placing the Indians on a complete equality as regards the franchise, is not intended to make any substantial alteration in the distribution of political power, and does not entail swamping the electorate with Indian voters. It will, in fact, be necessary to draw any legislation which may have to be passed in such a manner (e.g. by the disqualification of all electors who are unable to write English or by other methods which can be applied to the whole of the electorate) as to ensure that the wholly unintended result shall not occur.

In Fiji, the Officer Administering the Government, T.E.Fell, decided on the receipt of Churchill's above-mentioned despatches that

31 Minutes. ibid. C.O. to I.O. draft, 18 July 1921; C.0.83/159.
32 I.O. to C.O. 26 July 1921; C.0.83/159.
33 Minutes. ibid.
34 C.O. to O.A.G. 221, 27 Aug. 1921; C.0.83/159.
35 ibid.
37 ibid.
this was a matter likely to affect the Colony for all time and he ought to consult those likely to be there longer than himself.\textsuperscript{38} He wrote to the Attorney-General, T.D.H. Bruce, and two Suva lawyers, Robert Crompton and Henry Scott. At the time Fell thought that if the impracticability of extending a common roll franchise to the Fijians were explained to the deputation from India they might agree to accept the original proposition of two seats on a communal basis. For its part the Executive Council suggested the appointment of a confidential committee as the preliminary step.\textsuperscript{39} Maynard Hedstrom, merchant prince, the elected member from Levuka, and Executive Councillor advised that if adequate safeguards could not be erected against Indian political ascendancy then further migration from India should be halted. Thus the possibility that Indian franchise meant Indian take-over gained currency and became a tenet of faith with the European community. Hedstrom also added what was to become a recurring contention in the European case against concessions to the Indians, that to grant Indians political privileges beyond those given to the Fijians would be a betrayal of the Deed of Cession.

Hedstrom's fears were the result of a dilemma that had been perplexing European settler politicians for some time. They had from the early times sought to make Fiji a colony with representative institutions for themselves as in New Zealand and Australia. But a new reality had begun to dawn upon them and it was first publicly voiced by Henry Scott in 1917 during an election address. He told his audience that responsible government was impossible for Fiji, all that could be hoped for was an improvement in the existing system that enabled their voice to be heard on financial and domestic matters.\textsuperscript{40} They were outnumbered 30:1 by the coloured population and democracy, Scott warned, would mean that whites would be ruled by non-whites. The solution was an islands' confederation, by augmenting their numbers they could then say to London, 'We ought to have greater responsibility.'\textsuperscript{41} This was a recognition of their own position. Hedstrom summed it up very accurately in his comment that Britain would not permit Fiji to be governed by 'a handful of settlers'.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38} Minutes, Fell, 23 Nov. 1921. C.A.4/38.
\textsuperscript{39} Minutes Ex. Co. 25 Nov. 1921. C.A.4/39.
\textsuperscript{40} W.P.H. 5 July 1917.
\textsuperscript{41} L.C. Debates 1919:60.
\textsuperscript{42} ibid:61.
There was no question of government by partnership with the coloured inhabitants; Hedstrom and his friends did not think them ready either for the franchise or to share equal status with the Europeans.\(^4\)

Within the Colonial Office sympathy for European political ambitions was on the decline as exemplified by the following minute on receipt of Crompton's motion of 1917:

> The white population is about 4,000, but the wealthy planters and merchants monopolize the Legislative Council appointments. With a few exceptions among the merchants of whom Mr Hedstrom, a Fijian of third generation, is most notable, they are all of passage, only anxious to clear out as soon as their fortunes are made. They detest native control over land and are disturbed at the rapid progress of the Indians, who threaten to replace them.

It is this migratory character which distinguishes the white leaders from those of the West Indian communities which they quote as examples. If the planters, merchants and lawyers were really settlers and permanent residents, there would be something to be said for giving them preponderating power. As it is they cannot be expected to take any but short-sighted views and would involve us in constant trouble with the natives and with the Indian Government. You will notice that both the native representatives voted against the motion for an alteration of the Legislative, while the Indian abstained (at least did not vote).\(^4\)

Even Sweet-Escott, who though in favour of more elected representation for Europeans, warned them in 1917 that they could never hope for complete control of the finances and thus the government of Fiji.\(^4\)

Crompton obviously chose to ignore this, but Scott and Hedstrom did not and it was the latter attitude which was more significant.\(^4\)

The granting of the franchise was thus a complex problem for the Fiji Government. It was constrained by its obligations under the Deed of Cession and encumbered by racist pressures from the European leaders. Each step it took had to be a slow and measured one, full of caution. Each move had to be approved by the Colonial Office which in turn had to explain its action to the Government of India, which was always pressing for the acceptance of its views. These circumstances delayed the final decision and made all the more

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\(^4\) ibid.

\(^4\) Minutes, Sweet-Escott to C.O.353, 6 Nov. 1917; C.O.83/139.

\(^4\) L.C.Debates 1917:90. When he enclosed this debate with his despatch (No.353, 6 Nov. 1917) Sweet-Escott recommended an increase in European elected members, hence the Colonial Office minute quoted earlier.

\(^4\) Crompton (L.C.Debates 1971:81–90 and 1919 53–64) moved two motions
remote the day when the Indian first cast his secret ballot for his own representative.

Both Indians in Fiji and India were also responsible for the delay. Firstly, in January 1921 occurred another strike; on this occasion the sugar cane districts of Viti Levu stretching from Sigatoka to Rakiraki, and Labasa in Vuna Levu were involved. Besides the strike dragged on till August, though labourers began returning to work from July. Though no violence occurred in this dispute, feelings, which polarized along racial lines, ran high. The sugar industry was the lifeblood of the colony's economy and disruption therein posed serious problems for everyone. The Government in its correspondence blamed the C.S.R. Company's uncompromising attitude as the cause. Though it sympathized with the labourers it was indignant with their stubbornness and demands for wages as high as 12/- a day. For its part, the Company refused to accept its culpability and claimed that competition from places such as Java and a precarious market with declining prices advised retrenchment not capitulation to Indian demands. Again Indians by their behaviour caused a strong reaction among the Europeans.

Secondly, the promised delegation from India was delayed. Despite this, the Fiji Government continued to act promptly; it could not be accused of dilly-dallying. In 1921 the Acting Governor asked his Attorney-General to prepare a memorandum on the status of Indians in Fiji because India along with the franchise had requested equal rights for the former. The Attorney-General stated that currently there was nothing to debar an Indian from appointment to the Executive Council, the usual practice was to select the unofficial representatives from the elected members of the Legislative Council under the terms of the Letters Patent then in operation. An Indian could, however, be

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46 cont'd: for a greater voice in the affairs of Fiji. In the latter he advocated the franchise for Indians and Fijians. He added that if they misused it then it was their affair. Crompton by this stage had become a lone voice in quest of greater control. His European colleagues too wanted more say in the running of the government but they were more realistic in their assessments of the problems involved; among them Britain's obligations to the Fijian people.


48 The following paragraphs discuss the submission of the Attorney-General. C.S.O. 6707/21.
nominated to this Council and Badri Mahraj had filled this position since 19 December 1916. As regards municipal franchise the Indian had equal rights with any other person - so the official view held.

The Indians had the same trading rights as the Europeans and there were no legal obstacles to their advancement here. This, of course, affected a very small percentage of the Indian population. Most of them were cultivators and interested in land where discrimination existed as Indian leases were normally limited to 10 acres.

The memorandum mentioned that no liquor was permitted to the Indians except those exempted under the provisions of the Liquor Ordinance (1911). The aim was to safeguard Fijians, with whom the Indians were closely connected. One may question the total veracity of this claim of close association between Indians and Fijians especially as officials did their utmost to keep the two races apart. And there was minimal social contact between the two though Fijians had dealings with Indian traders. It was too readily assumed that Indians would provide the Fijians with alcohol whereas Europeans who had free access were unlikely to do so. Further, the restriction imposed on Indians was justified by the argument that Fijians and certain half-castes were equally affected. But as yet the Chinese were not discriminated against, despite the fact that traders of this group had greater contact with Fijians; they often lived in their villages and took their women as wives.

Indians were not entitled to demand as a right trial by jury. But the Chief Justice could grant them the privilege at his own discretion for special reasons. Again this did not apply to Indians alone as the Fijians, Chinese and all Pacific Islanders were in the same position.

Indians could not obtain gun licences or purchase arms or ammunition except on a permit from the Agent-General of Immigration and these permits were subject to conditions laid down by the Governor. Indians found wandering or loitering in any town between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. were liable to a fine and, in default of payment, imprisonment under section 24(6) of Ordinance V of 1876. They could not beat drums or otherwise make music in any town between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Nor could they emigrate from Fiji as labourers. These laws applied equally to the Fijians but this could not necessarily justify their existence. But they were the natural outcome of the
policy which the British regime wove as a protective cocoon around the Fijian people to shelter them from allegedly disruptive forces likely to erode their social fabric officially regarded as essential for their survival.

An ordinance to give Indians in Fiji equal status was drafted in 1921 and submitted to the Colonial Office for comment. From there it was referred to the India Office which in turn sought the advice of the Indian Government. The latter submitted its criticisms before the departure of Raju and his colleagues for Fiji. It raised questions on the discriminatory practices of the liquor and municipal ordinances, as well as the disabilities in the existing constitution and in the field of education. In the Colonial Office this response encountered indignation rather than sympathy. In the process of prolonged consultation between the governments and the bureaucrats the urgency of the issue was lost and no action resulted. Fiji was thus able to escape the task of ensuring equal status for Indians by legislation.

Within Fiji itself the possibility of equal status for Indians with Europeans caused great concern among members of the latter community. The Fiji Times, spokesman for the pro-white, anti-Indian element, denounced the concept and published letters from those who supported its stand. The Polynesian Gazette, published in the old capital of Fiji, Levuka, was not to be left behind: it decried equal status as abandoning Fiji to the mercy of the Indians. European leaders were in accord with their community. Their antagonism persisted even during the visit of the deputation led by Raju; some letters were unabated in their prejudice. The Government was told the 'coolie should be kept in his proper place'.

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49 I.O. to C.O. 10 Dec. 1921; C.O.83/159.
50 Minutes. ibid.
51 Fiji Times 1 and 4 Nov. 1921.
52 Polynesian Gazette 29 Oct. 1921.
53 Pacific Age 22 Mar. 1922.
55 Fiji Times 7 Jan. 1922, 4 Feb. 1922.
The old arguments that had been voiced during the strikes of 1920 and 1921 were once again unearthed. One of their severest critics in the press, a H.G. Paterson, stated that Indians had no grounds for complaint for they drove and hired motor cars and dressed more expensively than the average European besides having "a monopoly of the legal courts - and the asylums - which we [i.e. Europeans] have to pay for." Another felt that most of the Indians were content (a favourite European claim) to accept government by the superior white race. A third added that the majority of Indians could not be compared in intelligence and ethics to Europeans and until they attained European standards they could have no claim to an equal share in the management of Fiji or any other country.

Vocal Europeans in the years 1920 and immediately after gave the impression that they were disturbed about their own future. The Indian strikes as well as the worsening economic situation generally were contributory factors. And in the case of the 1921 dispute European planters with their not inexhaustible resources were especially vulnerable. Articulate members of the European community cast their minds yet once more for methods of consolidating their interests. As early as 1918 a group of Suva Europeans calling themselves the Fiji Annexation League had petitioned the Colonial Office requesting annexation by either New Zealand or Australia. As before this was not a practical proposition. But there were some who thought in terms of a broader Pacific Federation without giving the concept detailed consideration.

56 F.T. 7 Mar. 1922.
57 F.T. 8 Mar. 1922.
58 Ibid.
59 W.H. Cuthbert for Fiji Annexation League to C.O. 14 Nov. 1918; C.O. 83/144. The leading men in the movement were those who in 1916 had formed the very short-lived (and abortive) Fiji Reform League which sought among other things: "A Constitution for Fiji which will give the electors the right to control all domestic legislation through an elected Assembly; the rights of the natives being conserved by the conditions laid down by the Home Government." (Encl. Sweet-Escott to C.O. 356, 1 Dec. 1916; C.O. 83/133. C.S.O. 8253/16, 8535/16, 8895/16.)
60 Rodwell to C.O. 196, 22 Aug. 1919; C.O. 83/147.
had contended that with an islands' confederation with Fiji as capital would augment their numbers and enable them to say to London: 'We ought to have greater responsibility.' Two years later, in April 1921 he resurrected the concept in a motion in the Legislative Council. It received no positive response from either the Governor or the Secretary of State. Neither did the Government look with favour upon the scheme put forward in 1922 to introduce British migrants into Fiji despite support from European public meetings throughout the colony and Ratu Pope Seniloli's offer in the Legislative Council to make available Fijian land for the venture. At the public meetings Indian demands for equal status were denounced while it was claimed that an increase in European population might establish the primacy of the latter.

Reactions of Fiji Indians to these attacks in the 1920-22 period is difficult to gauge. A very large percentage of Indians was illiterate and of the literate few could write sufficiently well to rebuff European views. However, a few letters did appear in the Pacific Age, which took the stand:

We have to face the fact that we have here a certain number of Britishers who hail from India, are well educated, and have a stake in this Colony, and we cannot refuse them all rights of political expression just on account of their colour.

It deprecated the remarks of correspondents published by its rivals as 'vulgar jingoism, born ... of narrow ignorance and distorted viewpoint'. Some Indians defended themselves through its columns by reiterating their grievances and claiming that the redress they

61 L.C.Debates 1919:60.
63 Fell (O.A.G.) to C.0.186, 14 July 1921; C:0.83/157; C.0. to O.A.G.228, 9 Sept.1921; C.0.83/157.
65 Pacific Age 22, 23, 24 June 1922.
66 Pacific Age 3 Apr.1922.
67 Pacific Age 7 Mar. 1922.
sought was theirs by right.  

Into such an atmosphere of strained race relations the Deputation from India finally arrived in January 1922 and remained in Fiji till April. In its report it claimed that it had discussed the franchise with the leading Europeans as well as Indians and so believed that the scheme proposed would satisfy and safeguard Indian interests without prejudice to those of the other communities. Their recommendation which was given to the Governor beforehand was later summarised as:

... we understand that no development towards responsible government is possible except with the consent of the Fijian Chiefs, who with the British Crown are the only parties to the Cession. We regard a common electoral roll as an essential condition of responsible Government, for the Government must then be responsible, through the elected members, to the electorate as a whole. But under Crown Colony Government the elected members are purely advisory; and for the purpose of advice it is possible that the views and interests of different communities may be better represented by communal election. This would probably be the opinion of the native Fijians, if it were expressed. It is certainly the view of the European community. And it is also the view of leading Indians, who, from their experience in the Suva Municipality, where there are now only 12 Indian-voters, fear that with a common electoral roll they would neither be directly represented nor be able to influence the election of a European candidate. This disability would doubtless be remedied by time, with the spread of education and increased prosperity. But we are impressed with the necessity of immediate representation on an elective basis, in order that the Indian community may at once be brought into direct constitutional relations with the Government through its elected members. In existing conditions, therefore, we support the principle of communal representation. But if in the future there is any development towards responsible Government, we are of opinion, that the position should be reconsidered, and that the principle of a common electoral roll should be introduced.

The deputation continued that there were three overlapping interests represented by the three major communities; the Fijian owned the land, the European contributed capital and enterprise and the Indian his labour. Because each interest played an equal role

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68 Pacific Age 21 Feb., 6 Mar., 7 Mar. 1922.
69 Raju Report:68.
70 ibid:68-69. In the end the Report was neither made public nor generally acted upon because of its forthright and controversial nature.
71 ibid:69.
each community ought to have in the Legislative Council an equal number of seats. 72 There should be three unofficials on the Executive Council, one Fijian, one Indian and one European. 73 Here difficulties arose. The Acting Governor told the Secretary of State that the proposed distribution of seats could not be accepted without ascertaining the views of all classes who, he knew, from events in the Colony at the time, would not all agree. 74 For him the recommended abolition of education tests for the franchise was retrogressive and Indian membership of the Executive Council impracticable. Europeans and Fijians were opposed to any political concession to Indians. On his return from leave Governor Rodwell wrote that three Indians elected on a communal franchise would satisfy that community's political aspirations. 75 He wanted his Government consulted if and when a general policy was laid down by Westminster concerning Kenya and other colonies. He admitted that the existing European representation was indeed larger than essential and during his term 'there have never been more than four or five elected members at one time who have carried any weight in the Council'. Nonetheless, he was averse to a reduction of their numbers except with the concurrence of a majority of European elected members. An impasse again seemed the outcome. Amidst the obstinacy of all sides the proposals which provided a good starting point did not have a chance. Europeans were particularly adamant about any reduction in the number of their representatives. The Colonial Office did nothing; in fact it could do nothing until it had officially heard from its Indian counterpart. But there was delay and it was not until July 1924 that Whitehall took up the subject with Fiji.

In the meantime the Acting Governor had received some indication of an aspect of European thinking which was to come to the fore later. His Attorney-General suggested that the only way to prevent European voters being swamped in case of a common roll was to raise

72 ibid.
73 ibid:70.
74 O.A.G.Fell to C.O. Tel. 7 Mar. 1922; C.0.83/160.
75 Rodwell to C.O.Conf. 18 Apr.1922.
the requirements for both voter and candidate to ensure that those without a stake in the country, irrespective of race, should not dominate. The Council of Planters thought that even an educational test in the end would be insufficient; and if the sine qua non of obtaining Indian labour was equal status then they should either import Chinese labourers, who sought no political status whatsoever, or revert to the nomination system.

Robert Crompton argued that as long as an Indian demanded the retention of the right of repatriation at government expense he could not regard himself as domiciled in Fiji and thus was not entitled to the franchise. Nevertheless, he thought there were three alternatives: Indians should be content with the right to elect two members, or equality might be reached by surrendering the elective principle and reintroducing nominated members, or immigration from India be abandoned and some other source considered as Fiji had done its utmost to placate India and could do no more. When Fell conveyed Crompton's thoughts to London, it was minuted that if Indians with repatriation rights were debarred from the franchise then Europeans with contracts providing return passages would also have to be excluded. Moreover the stoppage of further immigration did not mean that the resolution of the Imperial Conference on the Indian position could be ignored. In another minute, Green, usually sympathetic to the European position wrote:

I doubt if Sir M. Hedstrom, Mr Scott and Mr Crompton really represent the view of the European community, most of whom are not wealthy and do not visit Government House. I do not believe the majority would acquiesce in a restriction or withdrawal of the franchise.

The deduction was forthright but probably erroneous as it was unlikely that the stand of this triumvirate conflicted with that of others in their community.

76 C.A. L/76.
77 C.A. L/77.
78 C.A. L/78.
80 ibid.
In July 1924 the Colonial Office once more set out to settle the thorny problem of the franchise. The Secretary of State told the Acting Governor of pressures upon him to concede either common roll or equal representation and sought advice on likely reactions in the Colony. If he were to reject common roll he had to be accommodating; and as two seats for Indians would not be a sufficient concession Whitehall wished to know whether there would be any objection to three, on the basis of the Davson Report. Some approximation of equality would undermine European influence, which depended on quality not numbers, but it would arrest interference from India. The Colonies Committee of the Government of India had pressed for revision of the municipal ordinance and amelioration of the Residential Tax legislation, as well as appointment of an agent of the Government of India to oversee the conditions of Fijian Indians. The Governor was asked to consult the elected members and the Executive Council plus any other unofficial of standing; the Secretary of State would consult Hedstrom.

The Secretary of State's telegram of 28 July received prompt attention from the Executive Council. Fortunately for the student of history these deliberations were noted in detail. The Executive Council saw two alternatives: (a) a common electoral roll and (b) equality in numbers between European and Indian elected members.

Henry Marks spoke at some length. He admitted the inevitability of governmental recognition of the political rights of Indians. While he did not like common roll he found alternative (b) impracticable so advised acceptance of (a). There would have to be strict supervision of enrolment and strict enforcement of requirements for qualifications to eliminate malpractices. In his opinion many half-castes already enfranchised were not as good as the rising generation of Indians, who possessed better standards than their forebears and so were entitled to vote. The better class of Indians had a stake in the country and must by right be recognized as citizens. A knowledge of English should not be imperative for enrolment, those who could read and write Hindustani should be

81 C.O. to O.A.G. Tel. 28 July 1924. C.A.H/81.
82 ibid. C.A.H/82.
83 Undated Draft of the discussion in the Executive Council of the Secretary of State’s telegram. C.A.H/83.
accepted but there had to be at least this modicum of literacy qualification. Income and property qualifications too should be necessary and the onus might be on the applicant to prove that he fulfilled the minimum stipulated by law. Candidates for the Council must be able to read, write and speak English, have the existing property qualifications, and their income should be at least £500 p.a. In an outburst rare for a European representative he called the Government to face up to the fact that in ten or fifteen years Indians would dominate the elected side because of their standing in the country. It would be suicidal for the Government not to accord them the political rights they sought and deserved in a country which must inevitably be 'a semi-Indian country'. Because of its permanent majority Government need have no fears. Marks also thought that Indians would not vote as a united body, and some would cast their ballots for European candidates.

The Colonial Treasurer, Harcourt, disagreed with Marks. Common roll meant Indian domination and if equal rights were accorded then Fijians too should receive it. But this would involve the reconstruction of the entire fabric of Fijian life, which would also be subordinated to Indian interests. To prevent this he preferred alternative (b) which did not imply giving the elective principle to the Fijians.

The Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Montague preferred (a) if it could be made workable as it would enable members of the Legislative Council to represent a very considerable proportion of the population. Granting Indians the franchise did not automatically require the same for the Fijians whose interests were safeguarded by the Government majority. Alternative (b) meant seven Europeans and three Indians and would not placate the latter. On the other hand, common roll would produce 'an excellent effect on Imperial interests and assist the Anglo-Indian situation, especially if given of our free will'. Europeans should be induced to accept it and if this proved a failure then (b) should be adopted.

The Attorney-General, Muir Mackenzie agreed in principle with Marks and Montague and plumped for (a). He did not think it was essential to grant the franchise to Fijians but those of them who
qualified could be given the vote.

The Acting Colonial Secretary, Steward contended that (a) would lead to Indian control in ten years especially as there was a large number of Indians earning £3 per week. Mainly in view of what Harcourt had outlined, common roll would prove a dangerous experiment. Alternative (b) was better with a policy of gradual approximation towards equality. Initially there should be five elected European members, three Indians and three nominated Fijians. He advised that Indian aspirations would be satisfied if Government granted a system of Indian district and provincial councils with an annual central council presided by the Governor.

Thus a majority by 3 to 2 favoured common roll; the absent member was Maynard Hedstrom and he without doubt would have preferred (b) though he was actually against both.

The Acting Governor remarked that in the case of (b) there should be five Europeans and three Indian elected members. Marks countered that Indians would object and demand five for themselves too. Thus each race should have four. Continuing in his mood of optimism he did not think they would vote en bloc against the Government. Nor did he want the Colony to be divided into electorates instead the Colony should constitute a single constituency wherein each elector cast a required number of votes. The other members, however, accepted the Governor's proposal for (b).

Among the advisers of the Acting Governor opinion was evenly divided. The surprising factor was the unexpected willingness to give common roll a trial. But Fell himself was aware of the reactions of the local European population who had been closely watching the behaviour of their counterparts in Kenya for some time with the possible threats of emulating it. His earlier expressions showed that Fell did not lean towards common roll and even on equal status he had doubts. He wrote privately to Green at the Colonial Office:

To admit too early a principle of equality may have awkward results, may upset the Indians themselves by turning their heads, and the balance of good Government which has continued for 50 years.

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84 ibid. 4/84.

For him, and others too, the Indian was still an unknown quantity in many respects. And what was known was not very well liked; the memories of the two strikes of 1920 and 1921 appeared at the times when Indian political rights were being considered. Moreover, Fell was convinced that 'there exists in Fiji a section of Indians of the Babu class who are extreme in their views'. They had been present for the last ten years and their activities required close scrutiny as they urged 'principles of equality, on unreasonable and impracticable terms' and were linked with Manilal's Indian Association of Fiji which was 'undoubtedly the source of propaganda of a seditious character'. His contention was strengthened by Indian opposition to the Residential Tax which began the previous year and gathered force as it continued, having among its achievements the voluntary resignation of the generally placid Badri Mahraj as a sign of protest and support for his countrymen.

With a deadlock in his own Council Fell was deprived of unanimous backing either for his own stand or its total rejection. So he had to rely on outside comment to help him frame his recommendations to London. The fact that the Secretary of State encouraged outside consultation enabled Fell to modify attitudes expressed in the Executive Council and substitute in their place a scheme not likely to cause turmoil in the Colony. As Governor it was his task to maintain law and order. The checks and balances which guaranteed peace required delicate handling; any alteration in the political base could very easily upset this and start in motion a set of events which might prove beyond control. The Fijians already had the Deed of Cession, and the European colonists capital and representation. Hitherto Indians without political status provided labour. It was more risky to undermine what the first two races already claimed as their holy sanctuary than to grant too little to the one that had nothing. It was more dangerous to go back

86 Fell to C.O.Conf.2, 1 Aug. 1921.
87 ibid.
88 Mayer 1963:143.
radically on the past than to be conservative with the future. While he had to pacify the Indians for the future good he had to ascertain that, in achieving this goal, he did not offend others by depriving them of what was their own. The lengthy discussion in his Executive Council and the split of opinion in it did nothing to alleviate Fell's task, in fact, it added to the complexity. He summed up his dilemma:

We cannot do without our Indians, and from the Colony's point of view alone it is essential we should settle them as placidly and loyally as possible by giving them reasonable political status. The Imperial point of view is a far larger one. The Government of India puts a ban upon us as an undesirable. We are under no obligation to her. We might say, 'We will treat Indians fairly; but we will do so according to our lights and we wish no further interference from you.' Such a policy would be disastrous from the Imperial point of view. We are a pawn in a great game. The prize to be won is that of India, emerging from her present upheaval, as an integral portion of the Empire; on Dominion lines, to stick to us for all time. Possibly I am not so optimistic about the ultimate result, but we can afford to play no false card to increase chances of losing it. Fortunately, the policy we will have to adopt for the Colony's future coincides very nearly with the policy which Imperial views require. Although within the past year the Indian atmosphere here is without doubt more placid, if we play the wrong game the Government of India (or the Indian section of it) might certainly start a campaign here to unsettle Indians and to demand repatriation. If we can stave it off for a year or so, Indians will, with fair treatment, become so settled that no agitation from India will move them. Then we can act accordingly. 89

Fell's predicament was not lightened by the prevailing attitudes of important elements in Fiji. The Attorney of the powerful C.S.R. Company, A.M.O.Farquhar expressed himself as opposed to common roll but not to 'fair political status'. Though he would not object to the numerical reduction of European seats as they were 'excessive for the interests involved', to do so for the sake of equal status was a dangerous policy. 90 The General Manager in Sydney, H.U.Dixon, held stronger views. For him it was of prime importance that the colonial Government retain a substantial majority to ensure effective control of legislation. 91 While he thought Indians unfit to rule he was equally reluctant to chance the fate of his shareholders to a government controlled by Fiji Europeans who in the past had displayed a desire to restrain by taxation the outflow of his company's profits from Fiji. He was agreeable to three Indian

89 C.A.Ii/89.
90 C.A.Ii/90.
91 C.A.Ii/91.
representatives along the lines of the Davson Report but certainly not to equal status or common roll.\footnote{92}

The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Suva were agreeable to the election of three Indians on a communal roll.\footnote{93} The Deputy Mayor, F.E. Riemenschneider, thought that common roll with an income qualification of £150 p.a. or £200 p.a. would enfranchise very few Indians and soon there would be a clamour for a lowering of the qualification or changing of the system of election. Fell disagreed, arguing that property qualifications would give a very large number of Indians the vote.

Early in August Fell also interviewed three elected members Scott, Marks and Barker. Scott maintained that the Secretary of State would agree to the retention of the existing number of European seats if three Indians and three Fijians were added to the Council. He and Barker were unalterably against common roll which meant ultimate Indian domination. Though all three contended that equal representation would be bitterly opposed it was the lesser of two evils and in any case Europeans must not have fewer than five elected members. They found Indian franchise on a communal roll with three seats adequate. Marks repeated his remarks to the Executive Council.

One of the country members, Clapcott wrote to the Acting Governor that he would not have any objections to three Indian seats if the Fijians had the same.\footnote{94} He added:

If there is only one electoral roll for all the Indians in the Colony, it would be quite possible to have three men elected with revolutionary ideas; this isn't likely to happen if two members are elected by men mostly on the land.

Agitators & those of high opinion of their power of speech prefer living in the towns.

Common roll was a betrayal of the Fijians who would also consequently have to be given the franchise and because of their ownership of the land would all qualify as voters. It would be many years before they could be educated for the purpose and any such change could cause trouble and undo past work. Equal representation had to be fought tooth and nail but if the Colonial Office imposed it then three members for each race would have to do. But to have only three

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{92} C.A.H/92.
  \item \footnote{93} C.A.H/93.
  \item \footnote{94} C.A.H/94.
\end{itemize}}
Europeans in the Legislative Council would leave agricultural interests unrepresented in a country which was wholly dependent on this sector of its economy for development. Clapcott did not think that much notice should be taken of the Planters' Association as most of those who attended its meetings had little interest in or any knowledge of the requirements of farmers. He concluded with a guess that if all Indians were repatriated to India only about 2% of them would qualify for the vote there and such people could not expect equal representation in Fiji.

Instead of immediately conveying to London the wide spectrum of views expressed, Fell merely told the Secretary of State that there was no local objection to three seats for Indians and he himself thought that an adequate preliminary step necessary, politic and desirable for two or three years before finally embarking upon equal status either through common roll or the reduction of European seats.

So far Hedstrom's contribution had not come. When it did, it proved a weighty one. It was given to the Secretary of State who sent it to the Governor:

I would be opposed to general electoral roll in Fiji because ultimate result would be detrimental to interests of Colony in general and Fijians in particular. I would advise offer Indians 3 seats in Legislative Council but do not think any greater measure of elective representation could be justified in present conditions.

Knowing Colonial policy must not conflict with Imperial Conference declaration of equality I realize this offer does not provide a permanent settlement but should satisfy aspirations of local Indians for many years. Meantime we should not concede more than is absolutely necessary. I do not think that question of reducing number of European Elected Members should be considered at present but an endeavour should be made to evolve some scheme whereby increase in numbers of official members may be avoided.

Hedstrom was a diehard fashioned in the Delamere mould. The previous year he had wondered in the Governor's presence whether Whitehall was resorting to delaying tactics in order to spring upon them common roll and equal status; and he had been emphatic in his pronouncement that

95 Fell to C.O.Tel. 30 Aug. 1924.

96 C.O. to Gov. Tel. 1 Sept. 1924.
he would rather go back to the nominated system than concede beyond the Davson recommendations.\textsuperscript{97}

Despite Hedstrom, the Secretary of State at that stage still had questions for which he sought answers in Fiji.\textsuperscript{98} He doubted the practicability of offering three seats with the postponement of equal status. There had to be a clear indication of the relationship between three seats and the demand for equal representation. What were the precise local views on the 'policy of adopting the principle of gradual approximation towards equal numbers'. Not only had the present Indian demands to be satisfied but a long-term policy formulated to deal with the later advance in wealth and education of the race. India would not have to be told of the exact time when equal status would be implemented but at the same time they themselves had to be ready for no one could speculate when that Government would press them again on the issue.

To provide answers to these a conference was held at Government House on 7 October 1924 at which were present members of the Executive Council, the elected representatives in the Legislative Council, the Mayor of Suva and Robert Crompton. Significantly no Indians were invited, not even Badri Mahraj. There was at this stage no official to oversee the affairs of this community. The fate of the Indians was to be decided without reference to them, though their noted antagonists, Hedstrom, Scott and Crompton were consulted. The Government could have found a way to consult the Indians but perhaps it was thought superfluous on the argument that they and their sympathizers had been provided with the opportunity during the public hearings of the Davson Commission.

The result of the Conference was as follows:

(1) Unanimous agreement to give Indians three seats in the Legislative Council, on a communal franchise. The number of Fijians, retaining the existing method of selection, was to be increased to the same number. This was deemed adequate for both races.

(2) The elected members were willing to reconsider the position when conditions changed and Indians advanced 'in capital interests, education, wealth and numbers and in

\textsuperscript{97} C.A.H/97.

\textsuperscript{98} C.O.to Gov. Tel. 23 Sept. 1924.
the light of experience gained regarding the aptitude of Indian members of the Council and voters to exercise their political rights and to exhibit their sense of responsibility to the interests of the Colony as a whole'.

(3) With the exception of Henry Marks the elected members refused to go any further and declined to pledge themselves to a policy of future equality no matter how gradual.

(4) The others at the conference, except the Mayor, were prepared to reconsider the issue with the view of gradual approximation towards equality in the number of representatives on the principle of 'equal representation of equal interests'.

(5) The elected members would not support any reduction in their numbers and instead advocated an increase of one. The Mayor favoured only the first part. The others thought that apart from the question of equal representation a strong case could be made on the merits of the electorates alone for a reduction by two and this would not be detrimental to the interests of the Colony and ought to be considered before the next general election in 1926. Also if no reduction was made and with the absolutely essential retention of the official majority the Council would become cumbrous to a degree unwarranted by local circumstances and would involve the nomination of an excessive number of officials.

(6) If the Secretary of State accepted the latter suggestion the Acting Governor thought that the reasons for it ought to be given to the Government of India without the indication that it meant an immediate commencement of a 'policy of approximation towards equality'.

(7) It was important that Fijians should not think that what Indians were receiving was being denied them. Therefore the Council of Chiefs should be asked whether they wished to retain the present method of nominating Fijians to the Legislative Council.

After receipt of this evidence of the trend of thinking among the leading European officials and non-officials in Fiji, the Secretary of State took a considerable time in reaching his conclusions. He would not grant common roll because of 'the circumstances of Fiji generally, and in particular the nature of organization of native inhabitants and \( \text{the} \) position in which \( \text{the} \) Crown \( \text{stood} \) in relation to them'. Communal franchise was the only solution. Indians would be granted three seats and the Fijian number would be increased to the same. The official majority would be retained not only in the interests of Fiji and the Fijians, but also because India would not accept the limited representation otherwise. He would be content with the reduction of European representation by one.

Because the remaining duration of the present Council was short it might be worthwhile to nominate three Indians for this interim period till the next elections.

The Secretary of State's decisions were generally acceptable. However, the suggestion that Europeans lose one seat was resented by the majority of them. Henry Scott put forward a counter-proposal with some support: that there be 7 Europeans, 3 Indians, and 3 Fijians and 12 official members with the Governor having an original as well as a casting vote. Hedstrom was more reasonable and accepted that the reduction by one would give the Secretary of State a chance to argue that the European representation was no more than the combined Fijian-Indian one. The Acting Governor doubted the practicability of a vote for himself. This would render the Governor's position more difficult; and it would not be in accordance with his dignity to vote on minor matters while on some open issues he could find himself voting with the minority.

Fell also questioned the wisdom of the interim appointment of three nominated Indians. Such a selection might provoke discord and it might even be refused if those approached thought nomination would diminish or nullify their chances at a subsequent election. It would be unfortunate if nomination were to deprive the Council of the best men later. Negotiations with India would take some months and more than a year would be needed thereafter for a committee to frame electoral regulations and arrange the election machinery. When these had been achieved the Council could be immediately dissolved and elections held on the basis of the new constitution. Local Indians would accept this alternative as reasonable.

Finally, the Fiji Government was of the opinion that the 'policy of gradual approximation towards equality' was unnecessary to satisfy local Indians and the European elected members were still adhering to the earlier stand on the issue.

100 C.O. to Gov. Tel. 7 Feb.1925; Fell to C.O.Tel. 25 Feb.1925.
101 Fell to C.O.Conf. 26 Feb.1925; Fell to C.O.Tel. 20 Mar.1925.
102 ibid.
103 Fell to C.O.Tel. 25 Feb.1925.
104 ibid.
The problem of Indian franchise as far as Fiji was concerned was now settled and it was left to Whitehall to negotiate with India. The Secretary of State had made up his mind as to how far he would go. So far the Europeans had triumphed. Admittedly they would lose a seat, but they had killed common roll and equal status. All was ostensibly done in the name of the Deed of Cession and consequent British obligations to the indigenous race. Local Europeans whose forebears were the direct cause of Cession could be more equal than the Fijians but Indians must not have equality with the ruling race. Such was the fiat of European colonialism and the subjects must either submit or rebel and suffer the consequence of being suppressed by a more powerful force.

The Indian position at this stage stood as recommended by the Colonies Committee of the Government of India:

Communal franchise as applied in Colonies where Indians do not form a minority community is regarded in India as a system which is intended to assign an inferior status to Indians as compared with their fellow subjects, and to limit the growth of their political influence in the Colony. 105

It also referred to the Indian reaction against communal franchise. 106

The Committee did not seek any special franchise for Indians and was prepared to accept the qualification for electors as prescribed by the Letters Patent of 1914 subject only to the revision of sub-clause 1 of Section 20 in order to delete racial discrimination against Asiatic British subjects and to include literacy qualifications recommended by the Davson Commission. 107 For candidates some reduction of the existing qualifications was desirable and the qualifying test in English ought to be the same for Fijians and Indians and to be left to the discretion of the Agent-General of Immigration. The Committee recognized that the result of this would be that the number of Indians would be too small for them to be able to elect one candidate. Hence three seats ought to be reserved for them until the effect of indenture disappeared and the prosperity of the community progressed sufficiently to enable them to receive representation without special protection. The whole purpose was to have common roll, and India seemed prepared to go to any length to

105 C.P.15/27.
106 C.A.4/106.
107 C.P.15/27.
obtain it. For instance, Kenyan Indians were advised not to jeopardize the prospect of it by creating a large Indian electorate, registered on adult franchise.\textsuperscript{108} The question arises why India was prepared to go to such lengths especially when communal electorates were established there in 1909? Perhaps this was the very reason for their opposition. Acceptance of communal franchise without bitter protest could be interpreted as recognition by Indian nationalist politicians of the claims for perpetuation of separate representation in India itself. If common roll was unacceptable then communal representation would be tolerable only if Indians had the same number of seats as Europeans in accordance with the principle of equality of status.

Despite these views, the Secretary of State submitted to the India Office proposals that had been agreed between Fiji and himself.\textsuperscript{109} India did not think three seats adequate and rejected outright the contention that 52,000 Indians possessed the right of repatriation and could return to the motherland.\textsuperscript{110} It refuted the argument by saying that from July 1922 to January 1925 an average of 1,100 had been repatriated annually and this was more than counterbalanced by the average annual increase in the Indian population. Even in the case of some unexpected future exodus, the remaining Indians would still greatly outnumber the Europeans. Accordingly it renewed its request for equal representation.

The Colonial Office refused to comply and the Indian Government reluctantly accepted; they still thought three seats inadequate but would accept since the Colonial Office was unable to move beyond its original offer. They asked for an amendment to enable the Indians to elect their representatives at the next election.\textsuperscript{111} This last

\textsuperscript{108} C.O. to Hutson Conf. 6 July 1926.

\textsuperscript{109} C.O. to I.O. 20 Mar.1925 in C.P.15/27.

\textsuperscript{110} Tel. from Viceroy, Dept. of Education, Health and Lands to the Secretary of State for India 11 July 1925.

\textsuperscript{111} Govt. of India, Dept. of Education, Health and Lands, to I.O. 27 May 1926.
request was impossible to implement because the 1926 election in Fiji came too soon after the acquiescence of India and left no time for the preparations essential for the task.

Within Fiji the situation seemed calm; there was no agitation and the Indians were prepared to wait knowing that the subject was being discussed with India. Governor Hutson waited for local reactions. If the Indians wished for nominated representatives in the intervening period then the recommendation for the measure ought to emanate from themselves rather than from Government House. In fact, a request did come from the Indian Association of Fiji that an Indian be appointed to the Legislative Council pending completion of arrangements for the election of their representatives and Badri Mahraj was once more (for the last time) installed in the seat he had first occupied in 1916. But a group known as the Young Men's Indian Association writing from Lautoka in October 1926 asked one Dr. A.Deva Sagayam, M.B. be appointed to the seat earlier vacated by Badri Mahraj. The reason for preferring Dr. Sagayam, a recent arrival from India, was that others including Badri Mahraj were not sufficiently conversant with the language in which the Council was conducted. The support for Sagayam, who was based in Nadi, was indicative of Indian recognition of the need for improvement in the quality of its leadership. Indians wanted someone who would be able to debate and match words with Europeans, someone who would lead in appearance as well as in fact.

It is appropriate here to retrace our steps and evaluate briefly Badri Mahraj's contribution in the Legislative Council and as leader of his community since his nomination in 1916. During his first year in Council, on three major issues: constitutional reform, regulation of the sugar industry, vernacular schools for Indians, he was conspicuous by his silence. The following year evidenced no noteworthy improvement.

112 Hutson to C.O.Conf. 18 June 1926.
113 ibid.
114 C.O. to Hutson Conf. 3 Nov. 1926.
When in July 1919 Hedstrom moved for the abolition of the indentures to take effect from 1 August 1920 Badri Mahraj again remained speechless. Here was a subject of which he knew more than all others; he had been through the experience and he was aware of what his countrymen were demanding. Perhaps on this occasion he was a landlord and employer and stood to suffer financially from the immediate abolition of the system which he thought needed reform not destruction. On the same day and on the next motion for setting up a committee to improve the sex ratio of the Indian population, its housing conditions, medical and nursing arrangements and educational and religious facilities, all he could do was to utter a single sentence 'I agree' to an ordinary speech by a planter, Harricks. Not until the debate on the Marriage Ordinance 1918 Amendment Bill did he make a speech of any substance, one lasting no more than three or four minutes. Yet he did make the all-important point:

In Fiji, much damage is done to the cause of the Indians by the Government not recognizing as valid and strictly binding, the marriages performed by a Mohammedan priest, or Indian pundit.

For its part the Government had already accepted this contention.

His next significant contribution was in October during the passage of the Closing of Premises (wholesale and retail) Bill when he drew attention successfully to effects in the rural areas and especially on the labourer.

If this seemed to foreshadow greater things they did not materialize. All he did was second without comment Harricks' call to the Government for a monthly Hindi newspaper. But in November he did emphatically state that Indians could not live on 1/- a day and if planters paid more than 2/- or 2/6 a day then Indian labour in Fiji would be available. During his speech he also remarked that C.F. Andrews' report contained very little truth. By this time he had already been nominated for a second term.

118 ibid:45-49.
119 ibid:159.
120 ibid:229-230.
122 ibid:113-114.
Altogether this was certainly not a very impressive performance by the first Indian to sit in the Legislative Council. He did not initiate any motion nor ask the many pertinent questions that ran through Indian minds during these years. There was no denunciation of the Government nor any praise of it. He apparently recognized his own inadequacy and spoke only when it was unavoidable though he could have been more vocal than he was. But he was no match for Crompton or Hedstrom or Scott and instead of doing battle with them, which in any case would have been futile (as future Indian members were to discover) he kept the peace. If he did nothing remarkable, he also did nothing foolish that might cast doubt on the value of the need for Indian representation in the Council. Nothing on his part gave anyone any reason to urge that Indians should be deprived of the nominated seat. The process had already been set in motion to give Indians elective representation before Badri Mahraj's first term had expired.

Throughout his tenure in the Legislative Council (1916-23 and 1926-29) he behaved in a low key except in 1923 on the issue of the Residential Tax. This he opposed strongly and in full agreement with his fellow Indians who agitated against it. When he failed to move the Government he resigned his seat. This was an important change from his behaviour in 1920 and 1921 when he had refused to support the militant elements who had gone on strike. In fairness to Badri Mahraj one might say that he adhered to his principles. On these occasions he appeared a conservative. But he was also an active Arya Samaji, though not necessarily a religious bigot. And in 1923 he refused as a nominated member to be just a cipher of the Government.

Nonetheless he lacked the dynamism that appealed to a community that was in a haste to demand alleviation of its grievances, real and alleged. He was a self-made man who had achieved much through hard work and co-operation with others. His community sought someone more articulate, more versatile, someone who could be frequently defiant and vocal, someone prepared to engage in the battle of words in the Legislative Council with confidence and ability to score points off his opponents. It was this that perhaps encouraged a group of young men

123 Mayer 1963:43.
to propose the name of Dr. Sagayam. The Government chose to ignore the call. Perhaps it felt that Sagayam as a newcomer had not yet proved himself while Badri Mahraj had by 1926 won some respect and acceptability among his own people. Besides, the franchise for Indians was near and there was no point in terminating the innings of the tried leader for an unknown quantity.

SOMETIMES before the public announcement of Indian representation on communal franchise Governor Hutson decided to appoint yet another committee to advise on the qualification of electors and candidates.\(^\text{124}\) In his memo Hutson recommended three electorates with indirect voting along the lines suggested by Chowla to the Davson Commission.\(^\text{125}\) The second part of the recommendation was quite superfluous as the Davson Commission had fully dealt with the unsuitability of using the 'panchayat' form.\(^\text{126}\) Fortunately the Committee would not hear of it. In its report of September 1926 it favoured direct voting with secret ballot.\(^\text{127}\) Moreover, it agreed that the vote should be given to British subjects of Indian birth but British protected persons should also be given the privilege as in Kenya and Ceylon. There should be no insistence on educational and property qualifications for electors rather there should be universal adult franchise for which precedent existed in Kenya. For candidates, property qualifications were deemed necessary though Pilling dissented from this recommendation. Again the Governor's memorandum and the Committee report with their

\(^{124}\) Those appointed were the Attorney-General as Chairman, the Acting Agent-General of Immigration (J.S.Neill), the Chief Police Magistrate (R.C.G.D.Higginson) and the Secretary of the Western Pacific High Commission (H.G.Pilling).

\(^{125}\) C.S.O. C26/26.

\(^{126}\) Hutson advised the Committee not to use the expression 'panchayat' in referring to the District Electoral Board.

\(^{127}\) C.S.O. C26/26.
details about electors' and candidates' qualifications should have provided the basis for a quick amendment of the Letters Patent and the election of Indians but no decision could be finalized without the concurrence of Whitehall.

The Secretary of State wrote that in the initial stage some property and educational qualifications were essential for the electors for if they were omitted at the beginning it would be difficult to impose them later. Indian franchise in Fiji was an experiment and its consequences were unforeseen hence safeguards as in other colonies ought to be adopted. For instance, in Ceylon, an elector had to be able to read and write English or a specified local language and in Fiji there should be a similar requirement of English and a stated Indian language. Property qualifications were to be stipulated in accordance with local conditions. In Fiji the Executive Council decided to defer decision on it till the arrival of the Secretary of Indian Affairs.

Yet another committee was set up for the task comprising the Colonial Secretary, the Acting Attorney-General (H.M.Scott, the elected European member) and the Secretary of Indian Affairs. First, the last named submitted a lengthy memorandum on the issue. He thought that there was a danger in the registration of Indians because only a small number was likely to get on the roll and these would be friends of the politically-minded. Thus these qualifications could become purely fictitious. To solve the problem rules should be framed to give votes automatically to a considerable number of different classes. Many Indians on a daily wage were entitled to repatriation and this group, a temporary element, and with nothing to lose would be open to subversion by professional politicians. Consequently the franchise must be limited to the permanent residents and insistence on property qualification was imperative. As many of the settled cultivators as possible should be included on the roll because these were the real producers in the Indian community and adequate representation for them would result in stability. Payers of licence taxes such as keepers of retail

129 Minutes Ex.Co. 6 May 1927.
130 C.A.H/130.
stores, tailors, hawkers should be franchised automatically but not those with licence for hawking pigeons or other wild birds. Income, and educational qualifications too were suggested. The Committee submitted its report late in October and in November the Executive Council accepted the recommendations with some modifications. It was 1928 by the time these were approved by Whitehall and incorporated into the new Letters Patent published in February 1929.

But all was not settled yet. When the Letters Patent were published those who were subjects of native states such as Kathiawar, Baroda or Hyderabad and classified as protected persons found themselves excluded. Nor was Gujarati listed as one of the dialects among those accepted for qualification. Deputation and protest from those excluded followed. The Acting Governor, Seymour, stated that Gujaratis had on the average higher educational qualifications than other Indian groups and their disqualification was to be regretted. But as the Letters Patent required that the general election take place within six months of their proclamation time precluded the Gujaratis from being enfranchised. The disability was later removed but one wonders whether the lack of rapid official effort to provide redress was a consequence of the Gujaratis being known to be supporters of the Arya Samaj faction which was locally regarded as extremist.

Thus after much debate, discussion, pressure and obstruction Indian franchise became a reality in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Indian arrival in Fiji. Yet it brought only partial joy to Indian political activists. Though they were now enfranchised for participation in the central legislative body they still harboured bitterness about their virtual exclusion by stringent restriction since 1915 from municipal politics. Just as India had involved itself in the issue of the franchise for the Legislative Council so it pressed for the re-examination of the municipal question.

The Raju Committee in 1922 commented that the education test deprived Indians of participation in municipal affairs. Among

131 Minutes Ex.Co. 2 Nov.1927.
132 C.S.O. 04/7/29.
133 Raju Report: 72.
their recommendations was a call for the repeal of the education test and the use of ballot papers printed in the vernacular, introduction of the ward system to ensure minority representation or the sanction of 'plumping' for a single candidate. 134. The Government of India's paper on the position of Indians in Fiji, published in 1927, also referred to the subject and advised the use of Indian vernaculars in a simple educational test and 'the ward system under the powers already vested in the Governor under section 3(3) of the Ordinance of 1909. 135. And a commission was set up as a consequence of this paper. 136

After three meetings a majority of the Commission, i.e. Scott, Marks, Millett, Hedstrom and Sukuna, decided that no amendment to the law was necessary and 'under present circumstances' the 1909 Ordinance operated 'equitably towards all classes of the ratepayers'. Governor Hutson refused to recommend this view to the Secretary of State. Since the majority report was short and presented without reasons for arriving at its conclusions, it would be fruitless to try to speculate in detail on what influenced it. But it is noteworthy that Scott and Hedstrom were in the forefront of the battle to impose the education test. Marks, with them, constituted the 'big three' of Fiji European society and its politics. They shared identical convictions. With his knowledge of local politics Hutson perhaps erred in judgement by appointing Scott as Chairman. A perusal of

134 ibid:72-73.
135 C.P. 15/27. Section 3(3) of XXV of 1909 read: 'The Governor may by proclamation divide a town into wards and define and alter the boundaries of such wards.'
136 The terms of reference of the Committee were to consider:
(a) the question referred to on page 2, Council Paper No.15 of 1927, under the heading 'Municipal Franchise';
(b) whether the Municipal Institutions Ordinance 1909 operates equitably towards all classes of ratepayers; and
(c) to submit recommendations as to the desirability or otherwise of amending the Municipal Institutions Ordinance 1909 with particular reference to Part II relating to members and officers, and to Part III thereof relating to the elections of members of the Councils and by-laws made thereunder.'
C.P. 38/29.
correspondence of the previous two years relating to Indian franchise generally would have sufficiently revealed to Hutson the standpoint of Scott and his supporters.\textsuperscript{137} The Chief Justice or even the Colonial Secretary, or perhaps Pearson as Secretary of Indian Affairs (though the latter not without local protest), might have proved a better chairman. Ratu Sukuna's behaviour was quite logical as he intended to side with the conservative stalwarts of European opinion.\textsuperscript{138}

The minority presented two separate reports.\textsuperscript{139} One came from the Secretary of Indian Affairs and the other from the three Indians jointly. Both were agreed on the crucial issue that the 1909 Ordinance did not operate equitably towards all. Pearson, however, disagreed with the Indians' practice of providing reasons for their conclusions and with certain passages in their report which offended against what he considered to be ordinary rules of procedure. There had been a discussion on the question of not divulging reasons for any conclusions reached, but no vote was taken nor had the Indians given any undertaking on it.

From the Indian members came a detailed report containing a reiteration of the discontent of their community and the reforms desired. They condemned the 1915 amendment as depriving them of municipal representation and accused the Council of neglecting Indian

\textsuperscript{137} C.A.I/137.

\textsuperscript{138} Sukuna was absent from the first two meetings and before the third he had a long conference with Scott. Sukuna's vote proved crucial at the third meeting as hitherto there had been a 4 - 4 split. (C.S.O. 3603/27.)

\textsuperscript{139} Indian Minority Report. C.P.38/29.
residential areas. They gave the ratepayers and electors as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Ratepayers</th>
<th>Electors</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>149 evidently being occupiers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>121 evidently being unable to read, write and speak English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 evidently being occupiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-castes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14 evidently being unable to read, write and speak English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistics were to illustrate the injustice which made it 'difficult to secure attention to the needs of the Indian community'. Hence they sought the recognition of Hindustani, Tamil and Fijian along with English for the education test. Moreover, they wanted the residential qualification to be six months rather than three months. An amendment here would have affected Europeans rather than Indians. There was also a wish to make compulsory the ability to read, write and speak English for Councillors. They discounted the claim that

140(1) Indians have been deprived of representation on the Municipal Councils since 1915 and have no facility for participating in Municipal affairs to look after their requirements and interests; (2) the Municipal Council of Suva is not carrying out its obligations to Indian ratepayers. Most of the roads in Indian areas are in a disgraceful condition, lighting arrangements in such areas are bad, and measures of discrimination have been adopted on racial grounds, in the matters of public baths and library; (3) the Levuka Municipal Council collects Education rates from Indian ratepayers although Indian children are not admitted into the Public School at Levuka.

(The collection of Education rate was discontinued by the Suva Municipality about the year 1916 by reason of the fact that Indian children are not admitted into the Public Schools at Suva.) (Indian Minority Report. C.P.38/29.)

141 They added: 'The other Indian languages such as Telegu, Malayalam, Gujerati, Punjabee &c., and foreign languages, such as Chinese
that their proposals would lead to domination by Indians. Further, they sought elections on a common franchise and expressed opposition to one on a communal basis because it would assign to them an inferior status. If this were unacceptable then they sought as an alternative the reservation of two seats for Indians, who, they argued, were playing an essential role in the prosperity of Suva and deserved an opportunity to voice their own wants themselves in their permanent home as no other community could adequately speak for them. The Secretary of Indian Affairs would not agree with them on all these counts. All he was prepared to do was recommend further investigation of the possibility of introducing Hindustani alongside English, an increase of residential qualification to six months, rateable property for occupier to be £20 p.a. and the division of Suva into wards. Pearson later claimed that he was unable to persuade the Indian members to his way of thinking as they submitted their report without informing him. Given the keen sense of hurt

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141 cont'd. do not come under the same category, and it would seem reasonable to draw a distinction.' (C.P.38/29.)

142 They stated: (1) Although the Indian population in Suva Municipal area is more than twice the number of Europeans, yet according to the last census report only 16 per cent of the Indian population are literate;

(2) only occupiers who are direct tenants of owners or registered lessees can become electors;

(3) our recommendation is not to extend the franchise to those who are literate in a language other than English, Hindustani, Tamil or Fijian which would bring the percentage of electors much lower than 16 per cent of ratepayers and occupiers;

(4) the labourers who cannot pay as much as £10 per annum as rent out of their annual income of about £36, calculated at the maximum rate of two shillings and sixpence per working day, will also be excluded from the electoral rolls;

(5) the number of Indian ratepayers and occupiers in Levuka Municipality is small. (C.P.38/29.)

143 They quoted contribution to rates on value of property as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Fijians</th>
<th>Indians</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£12,885.15.4</td>
<td>9.4.2</td>
<td>1,619.17.6</td>
<td>1,137.3.8</td>
<td>1,456.5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£17,108.6.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wheel Tax</th>
<th>Business Licence</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>£846.0.0</td>
<td>£1,823.17.0</td>
<td>£2,269.17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>776.10.0</td>
<td>1,171.2.0</td>
<td>1,947.12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>63.10.0</td>
<td>565.8.6</td>
<td>628.18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1,686.0.0</td>
<td>£3,560.7.6</td>
<td>£5,246.7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

144 C.S.O. 748/28.
among the Indians it is unlikely that they would have watered down their strictures to satisfy Pearson. The Acting Colonial Secretary, Islay MacOwan, thought the nature of the Indian minority report had put the Secretary of Indian Affairs in a false position. Pearson blamed it on the zeal of the Indians to exploit the opportunity for putting their case as forcefully as possible to achieve change, thus they over-stepped the bounds of discretion.

There were many difficulties and no simple solution was possible. For instance, according to the 1921 Census, the population of Suva comprised 22% Europeans and 47% Indians. In direct rates the Europeans paid around 70% to 75% as against less than 10% by Indians. When indirect rates were taken into account considerable adjustment was necessary, as the Indian members themselves suggested. If wheel tax and business licences were taken without adjustment the European contribution was 50%, the Indian 37%. Under the existing system Indians were by no means possessed of political rights in any approximate proportion to their contribution. It was estimated by Pearson that without the education test there would be 156 Indian electors to 206 Europeans. But these figures were unacceptable to the Europeans who argued that with a growing population Indians would swamp them. The Indians denied this danger. And neither side could substantiate their case with statistics. Scott argued that Europeans paid 75% of the rates and it was inequitable that they risk a municipal council dominated by Indians for which no European would seek election. Marks was explicit that if an Indian were elected to the Suva Municipal Council all the European members would resign thereby forcing the Government to assume control. This represented local European opinion and the Governor could not ignore this threat.

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146 C.S.O. 3603/27.
147 C.S.O. 1798/29.
148 ibid.
149 C.S.O. 3603/27.
150 Hutson to C.O. Conf. 25 May 1928.
The intricacy of the problem became apparent when reports came up for decision before the Executive Council. Governor Hutson felt that the reports had been disappointing if not 'distinctly abortive'. He found the Majority Report 'a move to shelve the question indefinitely'. The officials in the Executive Council generally favoured the adoption of the Minority Report submitted by the Secretary of Indian Affairs although the Attorney-General was opposed to the introduction of a dual language qualification and preferred the nomination of an Indian member or election by a communal franchise. He described the proposed ward system as inconsistent with the communal franchise to be granted to Indians for representation in the Legislative Council. The Secretary for Native Affairs, however, advised the acceptance of the Majority Report; if the language qualification was essential he was prepared to agree to Hindustani and Fijian being put alongside English. The two unofficial members, Marks and Hedstrom, preferred the Majority Report. As a compromise, Marks advocated that the Secretary of Indian Affairs could sit as the Indian representative in the Municipal Council. Hedstrom adhered to his original proposition stating that 'on the ground of public policy' he was strongly opposed to the introduction of a dual language qualification.

Governor Hutson stated that he would despatch all three reports to the Colonial Office and reserved his decision till the next meeting of the Executive Council. Subsequently he decided there were three alternatives:

1. adopt Pearson's report, modify the language qualification, and recognize both Fijian and Hindustani;
2. amend the 1909 Ordinance, specify the number of elected members and raise property and residential qualifications along with recognition of Fijian and Hindi while providing for the nomination of no more than two members by the Governor; and
3. before reaching any decision investigate the allegations of the three Indians on the Commission.

151 Hutson to C.O.Conf. 25 May 1928.
152 ibid.
A Commission under the Chief Justice was instituted to hear evidence in public and pronounce on the allegations of the three Indian members. The Chief Justice kept strictly to the terms of his reference and adopted a very legalistic approach. Perhaps there was no choice as both sides were represented by counsel who adopted court procedure and Chief Justice Young had no wish to add to the controversy. The judgement of the Chief Justice was by no means definite:

1. Prejudice did exist in the language test but not to the extent suggested;

2. Allegation concerning the rating and the education rate of the Levuka Municipal Council were sustained while that regarding the reading room of the library were 'apt to mislead and afford no substantial grievance'.

For the Governor's purpose these were no help. At first he advised the Secretary of State that he could recommend neither the Majority Report nor that of the Secretary of Indian Affairs though he generally agreed with it. Of the Indians born in Fiji who had grown up in the last 50 years there was not an adequate number educated to a sufficient standard to warrant a change in the prevailing education test and he thought it expedient to defer that change. Nonetheless the law ought to be amended to give Indian ratepayers direct representation in the Municipal Council. To achieve this he would nominate two (one of them the Secretary of Indian Affairs) for Suva and one, an Indian, for Levuka. Later he advised that the election of Indians on a communal basis to the municipal bodies as intended for the Legislative Council might be deferred for some years.

The findings and minutes of evidence were published as C.P.39/29. The Commission held its first sitting on 15 October 1929 and the last on 7 January 1929.

He stated for instance: 'It will be observed that in the addresses Counsel on one side characterized the Minority Report as not being a bona fide report made on behalf of the Indian community; whilst Counsel on behalf of the Indian ratepayers referred to the 'spirit' and 'attitude' of the Municipal Council of Suva in the way in which it had come before the Commission. On these recriminations I offer no comment. My sole duty as Commissioner is to find whether or not certain allegations and statements contained in the Minority Report are justified, and, if so, to what extent.' C.P.39/29.

Hutson to C.O.96, 2 Apr.1929.
In 1929 then Indians set out for the first time to vote by secret ballot in a Legislative Council election. This was some achievement but it was marred by their sense of deprivation in municipal matters. Their behaviour in the new era would be scrutinized. Their quest for the franchise and the steps towards its bestowal had aroused responses and reactions in other communities. Each had evaluated the progress towards the constitutional landmark of the franchise for Indians in terms of its own security in Fiji. Therefore how the Indians utilized the franchise was to be crucial for the political future of the Colony.

The European politicians made their position extremely clear from the outset; in their remarks in the European election campaign of 1929 Scott and Marks, both seeking election in the two-member Southern Division seat, were particularly critical. Scott accepted that Indians should be enfranchised but expressed total opposition to social equality for them. Marks went even further. He deprecated the granting of the franchise to the Indians because by accepting this Europeans had manufactured 'a whip to flog themselves with' and added: 'We have the Indians here and we must make the best of it and teach them 'we' are the Colony and not the Indians.' He accused the Government of neglecting the Fijians because of its obsession to placate Indians. Though he was not against educating Indians he thought that they should be taught to read and write and then sent back to the land because Fiji wanted them as agriculturalists not as lawyers or solicitors, nor did it want to have its gaols 'filled with educated criminals'. Here indeed was a challenge to Indian politicians.

156 Hutson to C.O.Conf. 9 Apr. 1929.
157 For the attitudes of the Fijians see Chapter VI.
158 F.T. 4 Sept.1929.
159 F.T. 6 Sept.1929.
THE POLITICS OF ASSERTION

THE enfranchisement of Indians was a landmark for the community. It had come almost a decade after the abolition of the indenture system which in itself had been a milestone. The intervening years between the end of the indenture system and the arrival of the franchise had witnessed significant changes in the community. The Indian population was increasing rapidly. Largely it was the consequence of natural means as Appendix II indicates. But in the nineteen twenties the arrival of passage-paying immigrants from India received a new impetus which was curtailed only by the restrictions of the Fiji Government in 1930. These were imposed in the interests of the Fiji people and though Fiji-Indian opinion was divided on the subject, it was significant that the Fiji-born generally agreed with the Government measures. Unlike the indentured labourers the new migrants were mainly Punjabis and Gujeratis, more of the latter than the former. Though the Punjabis became labourers and to a lesser extent cultivators, the Gujeratis entered commerce as small shopkeepers. And with the flow of free migrants came some men whose names appear in the following pages - among them were the two Gujerati lawyers S.B. Patel and A.D. Patol as well as the Punjabi school teacher K.B. Singh who arrived in Fiji via Singapore. Though these men were to make Fiji their home eventually, in the early days their loyalty appeared to be divided between Fiji and India - they were as much interested in the success of the nationalist struggle in their motherland as they were in the causes of the local Indians. But their influence and role must not be overstated because the Fiji-born produced their own leaders which in itself was an important

1 See Appendix II.

2 For a discussion of such immigrants in the pre-1920 period see Gillion 1962:130-135. C.P.20/02, 21/08, 14/11.

3 C.P.2h/35, 2h/38; Luke to C.O.52, 13 Mar. 1939.

4 With the passage of time Gujeratis came to dominate commerce, along with European business-houses. Some of the small family businesses
development.

These were the signs of a community on the march towards conditions which were an improvement on the indenture days. In fact, from the onset, once the Indians had served their girmit they strove to become participants in the cash economy of the Colony. Though a majority remained in agriculture, they sought to obtain land and cultivate it on their own behalf instead of continuing solely as labourers. Thus the emergence of a class of peasant cultivators was contemporaneous with the indenture system, and at the turn of the century a few Indians even became the employers of their indentured countrymen. And early they became competitors with European cane growers until they ultimately ousted them. In this they were helped and encouraged by the C.S.R. Company particularly after 1920 when they increasingly became tenants of and contractors to the Company. While in 1925 they cultivated less than 50% of the acreage devoted to sugar cane, by 1937 their contribution approximated 90%. Sugar cane production became the economic life-blood of the Colony and the Indians controlled and contributed to it as much by their labour as the C.S.R. Company did by its capital and milling and marketing expertise. Sugar cane was the most lucrative agricultural crop and Indians on the land concentrated on it though they also grew rice and vegetables which they consumed themselves or sold. Along with the Chinese they became the market-gardeners of the Colony.

Official accounts, especially the reports of the Secretary of Indian Affairs, make frequent references to the prosperity of the

4 cont'd: of the early days were to develop into very large concerns involved both in retail and wholesale trade. Narseys Ltd. and G.B. Hari and Co. of Suva are two of the many examples of Gujerati prosperity.


Indians in Fiji during the nineteen twenties and thirties. This glowing picture might not have been totally accurate. It is certain that a small proportion of the Indians were becoming wealthy in Fiji, Badri Mahraj was an obvious example. But there was a substantial number who barely eked out an existence plagued by indebtedness and uncertainty of land tenure. There were some in the community who were landlords and money-lenders but there were many more others who were in the grip of the former. The strikes of 1920 and 1921 essentially economic in character, though not without slight political and racial overtones, indicated that wages had failed to keep pace with price rises of commodities basic to existence.

In their efforts to become independent cultivators Indians sought to acquire land on a more secure basis; their demands increased and gained rapid momentum after 1920. Here they encountered several difficulties. First, legislation forbade the alienation of native land and strictly controlled its leasing. Leases to Indians were usually for 21 years with provision for a further extension of 10 years; the size of the block of land was normally limited to 10 acres. After 1922 the intending buyers had to pay survey fees as well; in addition inducements had to be given to the owners to entice them to release their land, and in the prevailing conditions the owners could lay down their own terms.

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9 The Report of the Secretary of Indian Affairs for 1929 provides an excellent example: 'In reviewing the economic situation of the Indians in Fiji one is led to the conclusion that their purchasing power has risen much more rapidly than their standard of living. With the necessities of life so easily procurable, there are practically no paupers, but in the absence of competition and economic pressure there is a definite tendency, principally among the younger generation, to seek employment along easy lines, and to become clerks and taxi-drivers, instead of farmers; and landlords and money-lenders, instead of producers.' C.P.33/30.


Despite the difficulties in obtaining land, transfers of leases were frequent. That the leases were not abandoned but easily transferred to some other readily-available lessee, indicates that a great demand existed for cultivable land.

Not all Indians stayed on the land. Some though remaining labourers took employment with the Government or the municipalities or others needing their services. Some became taxi owners or drivers; others acquired licences to be hawkers or shopkeepers. But commerce gradually became the monopoly of the Gujeratis. The census statistics on Indian occupations show a considerable diversity, indicating the penetration of Indians into nearly every sector of the economy. By this process they became totally involved in the Colony's economic life while at the same time remaining a separate social, religious and racial entity.

Simultaneously the Indian community was increasing in numbers where the Fiji-born were becoming the dominant proportion. These knew of no other country but Fiji; they were quick to recognize that they must find a permanent place for themselves in the country of their birth.

A new awareness was emerging in the Fiji-Indian society during the twenties and was to continue thereafter. A recognition of the necessity to help themselves was becoming evident. Partly this found expression in a plethora of voluntary service organizations such as the Indian Reform League, the Indian Young Men's Association, the Fiji Indian National Congress, the Indian Association of Fiji, the Fiji Muslim League, the Arya Samaj Sangathans and the Then Ilkya Sanmarka Sangam, all designed to uplift the Indian community either in the social, economic or political field. Partly it was realized through the new assertiveness of the Indians. The strike in Suva in 1920 and the accompanying disturbances, the prolonged industrial dispute in 1921 with the C.S.R. Company, all exemplified racial

14 See Appendix V.
unity in quest of redress. The abolition of the indenture system changed social reality in Fiji and made necessary a revision of attitudes towards Indians by others. When it was not forthcoming the Indians were prepared to act in a concerted manner in an attempt to enforce change. The two strikes and the clamour for equality and enfranchisement were manifestations of the new spirit. The assertiveness was again evident in the protest meetings and petitions organized against the Residential Tax Ordinance in 1923.15

Throughout this period Indians seemed to suffer from a persecution complex. Whether it was education, land, or political rights they felt they were not obtaining a fair share. Having decided to make Fiji their home they sought to redress the balance in their own favour. Indian politics and politicians were orientated towards this end. In the pursuit of this goal racial solidarity was not always possible and Indian society frequently divided on linguistic and religious lines. But this did not diminish the determination of the vocal elements which championed Indian rights in Fiji.

THE grant of the franchise to the Indians opened up a new era in the politics of Fiji. The Indians were extended the right or privilege (depending on one's interpretation) before it had been bestowed upon the indigenous people. Political development among Indians would thus be more rapid than among the Fijians. This was a certain means of creating a political gap between the two communities, and the gulf would widen with the years unless immediate

constitutional reform equalised the rights or privileges of both races. As one community grew more sophisticated by the use of the ballot box and adjusted to the strong words and abuses of election campaigns its appetite for continued progression of the political process would increase. It was bound to demand repeated changes with an increasing share of the legislative power. Conversely while the other community remained protected and sheltered from the hurly-burly of democratic politics while it was repeatedly warned of the dangers of politics as a threat to the social mechanisms that allegedly sustained it, its conservatism strengthened its faith in the absolute need to preserve the status quo. All changes were viewed with distrust and even the slightest amendment conceded with the maximum of reluctance. By granting elective franchise to the Indians and simultaneously denying it to the Fijians, the British ensured, albeit unwittingly and totally without malice, a divergence of the political tempo of the two communities destined to dwell in the same political entity. Their different responses, culturally conditioned as well, often made for antagonistic attitudes on important issues. Where for the future the two races might have been brought closer, they tended to move apart, accompanied by needless misunderstanding and intolerance.

Because the activities of the nationalists in India threatened to dismember the British Empire, all Indian politics, whether in the motherland itself or among her progeny abroad, tended to be viewed with suspicion. The European settlers in the colonies were more conservative than their brethren at 'home' and their nostalgia for things British made them react with venom and indignation to all that seemed to threaten the rule of the Anglo-Saxon over lesser men. They were certain in their faith in their own superiority as a race and had no sympathy for those who challenged this assumption and desired to rule themselves, especially if they had dark skins. The officials might not countenance settler designs to assert racial supremacy but they believed no less in the divine position of their race in the Colony. Moreover any threat to the Empire menaced their own position no less. Often they were men who in the colonies had power and status that they would never have tasted in the land of their birth, and they were no less willing to safeguard their
citadel of privilege. The settlers with their public and frequent demands for more land and native labour, with their assumption that the native race and primitivism must ultimately perish before the onslaught of progressive white civilization, left themselves open to charges of racism and the condemnation of philanthropists, humanitarians and missionaries, no less rigid in their vision of the black man's role in the realm of God. On the other hand the officials could always conceal their self-interested intentions in the feigned charity of paternalism. Their motives were no less base than those of the settlers, but by the execution of an 'enlightened' native policy formulated by a benevolent government of which they were a part provided them with a useful camouflage.

And once Indians had become enfranchised there were doubts and fears as to how the Indians might use their latest gain. Even the first step of registration posed problems in the official mind. The need for practical workable electoral regulations had been recognized very early in the first few years when the franchise was being discussed. But the difficulty lay in the method of preparing lists of voters. The Secretary of Indian Affairs suggested the use of registers of persons holding land leases and paying taxes. He wanted the list prepared well in advance, as in India and Ceylon, and then scrutinized to remove those whose qualifications were inadequate. He feared that otherwise there was risk of the lists being largely composed of the personal friends and adherents of political schemers. This distrust, from the man who was the Governor's adviser on Indian Affairs did not augur well for the future. James Pearson, the Secretary of Indian Affairs, was a retired Indian Civil Service man, an unrepentant believer in British rule for the Indians with a dislike for those who appeared to question its validity. The Governor, Eyre Hutson, a man with considerable knowledge of Fiji, having served as Colonial Secretary in the Colony before returning as Governor, disagreed. He discounted

16 C.S.O.2385/23.
17 C.S.O.748/29.
18 ibid.
the likelihood of domination by 'political schemers' and favoured voluntary registration to protect the Government from criticism if numbers on the roll were small.\textsuperscript{19} There was no attempt to put any obstacles in the way of those seeking registration and some flexibility was permitted.\textsuperscript{20} Despite such leniency and the fact that qualifications for Indian voters were lower than those for their European counterparts only 1,404 persons registered in the three constituencies out of a population of nearly 75,000.\textsuperscript{21} Since property and income were required for qualification it is difficult, in the absence of statistics on these, to state how many were eligible and failed to register.

The year of the first election coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the advent of Indian indentured labourers into Fiji. The occasion called for celebration and despite the demur of Henry Scott and the Fiji Times the Governor declared the day a public holiday.\textsuperscript{22} The Indian, though congratulated, was reminded that it was a 'day for the sincerest thanksgiving for the fact that his forbears, he himself, and his friends, were privileged to come to this land flowing, as it were, with milk and honey and sprinkled so profusely with sugar, to work here and to live here under such conditions as are undreamed of in Mother India for people of the same class'.\textsuperscript{23} The editorial concluded that it was the duty of the Government to remember and pursue without any deviation 'that Fiji is the heritage of the Fijian and that we Britishers have been given the sacred charge of administering that heritage'.\textsuperscript{24} The Pacific Press and the Vriddhi Vani eschewed homilies of this kind in favour of tact and probability. From them came the suggestion of an Indian National Congress to include other races especially the Fijian and the Chinese.\textsuperscript{25} The Government doubted whether such an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{20} C.S.O. C10/29.
\item \textsuperscript{21} C.P.33/30. C.S.O.717/30.
\item \textsuperscript{22} F.T.13 May 1929.
\item \textsuperscript{23} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Pacific Press 2 Mar. 1929; Vriddhi Vani March 1929.
\end{itemize}
organization would work and recognized that the Native Department would object to Fijian participation; there was, besides, the risk that the Arya Samaj would capture it.26

Just as the Congress in India had initially been encouraged by a European so was the case in Fiji. In May, it was rumoured that a Scottish doctor, I.H. Beattie, who had been in Fiji for some time and displayed a humanitarian bent towards his coloured brethren, was about to call a meeting in Suva for this purpose.27 But shortly before this eventuated Vishnu Deo, a young Arya Samaji who had begun to emerge as a leader in his community, visited the north-western sugar-growing region and on 12 May 1929 founded a Fiji Indian National Congress in Lautoka. Dr. Beattie, who was described by the Secretary of Indian Affairs as 'notoriously sympathetic towards the achievement of Indian political aims by moderate means', set up his organization two days later.28 Where Vishnu Deo's group was heavily weighted with Arya Samaj elements, the office-holders of Beattie's Congress were predominantly Christians.29 The episode illustrates the division that was already evident within the Indian community. Both groups jealously maintained their separatism which reached its climax in the election in September.

When nominations closed there was to be a two-way contest in every constituency. The election elicited no great excitement and avoided issues that might have been contentious within the Indian community.30 The official conclusion was that local issues alone were raised and the controversial ones circumvented in a deliberate attempt to ensure the return of candidates sympathetic to the cause of Indian nationalism.31 When the difference between the candidates and the desire of each to obtain the honour of being the first Indian elected to the Legislative Council are considered it is difficult to accept that there was collusion among the six men who fought the

26 C.S.O.1182/29.
27 C.S.O.289/30.
28 ibid.
29 F.T.15 May 1929 gave the following: President J.F.Grant, Secretary H.S.Singh, Vice-Presidents Ila~ Ramzan, Ratu Ramsamujh, Asst. Secretary Gaya Prasad, Treasurer Deoki.
30 C.S.O.289/30.
31 ibid.
election. The officials had themselves accepted that in the Northern and Southern constituencies religion was 'the unspoken line of cleavage' between the candidates; they must have been deluding themselves when in the next breath they argued that these same men were united in a conspiracy.

In the Eastern division the contest was between a young Muslim in his twenties, Khalil Sahim and an Arya Samaj turned Christian, James Rao Ramchandar Mahraj, a theatre owner from Levuka married to a daughter of Peter Grant. In the Northern and Western constituencies both candidates were Arya Samaji Hindus. Champadan Namakadan Gopalan was an India-born doctor with a practice in Lautoka and a member of a local social organisation known as the Bhartiya-Mitra-Mandali. His rival, Parmanand Singh, was a Fiji-born, New Zealand-educated planter from Namosau. Since the Gujerati lawyer, S.B.Patel, had signed his nomination form, Gopalan, also a vice-president of Vishnu Deo's Congress, might be regarded as the official candidate of what Government would have termed the nationalist sympathizers. But Parmanand Singh, too, had his connections; he was brother to a future member of the Legislative Council, Chattur Singh, who at the time was regarded by the Government as the 'most active and the most able of the local extremist politicians'.

The voting in the Eastern constituency seems to have been on religious lines. There were 101 registered voters of whom 88 exercised their right though 5 did so incorrectly. Of the registered voters there were only 17 with distinctly Muslim names on the roll. Khalil Sahim, the Muslim candidate, received only 20 votes to J.R.R.Mahraj's 63.

In the Northern and Western constituencies no such division occurred as both candidates were of the same Hindu sect. Out of

32 C.S.O.1977/29. Khalil Sahim born at Toorak, Suva was about 25 years old and had been educated at the Methodist Mission School. He was married without children and had a plantation in Bua. J.R.R.Mahraj was India-born, apparently a Hindu who had embraced Christianity for the purpose of marriage.

33 ibid.

34 C.S.O.289/30.

640 voters, 588 exercised their right but 57 of these wasted their votes. This is explained by the low level of education and unfamiliarity with the system; it does not necessarily imply a widespread inability to read the names of the candidates accurately. In such a case the tendency would be to tick a name with the hope of having selected one's intended choice though some of the shrewder ones in this category may have made a mark on the ballot paper expecting that those doing the counting would decide favourably for the man they had in mind. The majority (309 to 222) chose Parmanand Singh, probably, because he was a local and could identify himself with them. Because he was a cultivator as was his father, here was also a similarity of class and occupation. This was particularly important because this was the sugar-cane electorate and the farmers with their own problems and grievances preferred a man whose interests were the same as theirs rather than a professional man, a newcomer in their midst, a man with whom they were likely to have little or no social contact. Singh came from Ba which had the heaviest concentration of Indian population among the districts involved; in a small electorate such solidarity counted.

Much of the interest in the first Indian election was concentrated in the Southern division. Not only did it contain Suva, the town of the working man as opposed to the self-employed farmers, but it was also in this electorate that Vishnu Deo conducted his fight for a seat. Vishnu Deo was born on 17 July 1900 in Navua, the son of Hargovind Dubay and Emily Balgovind of that district. He was educated at the Methodist Mission School in Navua and the Marist Brothers' School in Suva. Despite his wholly Christian education he remained a devout Arya Samaj. His career was varied; he had been a book-keeper, school teacher, clerk and interpreter. As a result of some financial irregularity he had been dismissed from government service. Henceforth he had a grievance against the Government. Fortunately for him there had been no prosecution, simply because during the previous year a Fijian chief of high rank had been involved in a similar misdemeanour

36 ibid:337-346, 487.
and the Government, sensitive to the man's position and possible repercussions, had decided not to chastise him publicly. It was therefore deemed that there should be no discrimination in the treatment of an erring Indian and an erring chief. His fortune or the official sense of justice Vishnu Deo chose to ignore.

The other contender was John Francis Grant, also Fiji-born and the son of Peter Grant, mentioned earlier. He, too, had been educated at the Marist Brothers' School in Suva but he was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Grant, a cinema proprietor, also owned a house and land in Suva. His only son was being educated in Sydney. He was also president of the rival Congress and a vice-president of the Indian Reform League, a social (also claimed to be social welfare) body comprised predominantly of Indian Christians and those Indians who aspired to European ways. Finally, John Grant was a member of the Board of Visitors at the Suva War Memorial Hospital; this post he owed to the generosity of the Government which was just beginning to appoint 'suitable' Indians to such 'advisory' bodies.

From the outset the two men were poles apart. One did not even possess an Indian name, an immense handicap in an Indian communal electorate; especially as he was also a member of a family distrusted by the Indians, for they had co-operated with the Government during the 1920 strike. As a Christian, John Grant's mode of living and values were different from the majority of his community. In most Indian minds he was associated with Europeans and what they stood for, especially on those aspects where the Indians felt themselves subjected to discrimination. The other man was a pundit, a Hindu and an Indian to the marrow of his bones; someone with a clean slate: someone who could claim, with whatever validity, to have been ill-treated by the Government. Where his rival was tarnished by association with Europeans and as a receiver of official favour, Vishnu Deo appeared as a man ill-used by the same group. In a small electorate where no man's past was a secret, where gossip-mongers thrived and at will could pull out of their immense repertoire some tale which incriminated a man or his family,

38 Hutson to C.O.Conf. 29 June 1926.

39 This assessment of Indian attitudes towards John Grant and Vishnu Deo is based on discussions and interviews with those who knew them or about them.
personal factors counted a great deal, in fact, they determined the Indian voter's identification of himself with, or revulsion from, an individual.

Of his disadvantages Grant himself was fully aware and in his address at Nausori he beseeched his audience to forget the past and forgive. In his address Grant promised many things: he would have the poll tax abolished, duty on liquor reduced, provide educational facilities, have the Nausori bridge constructed, make arrangements for direct passenger service with India. He expressed himself against all taxation and the education rate because a revenue surplus made these demands unnecessary. By co-operation with others he hoped to attain these and a general improvement of the Indians' position.

Vishnu Deo followed a different but more realistic approach. He emphasized the issue that mattered most at the time, equal status and the franchise. His audience was reminded that with three members the Indians were in a hopeless minority position. It was not possible for a candidate to put forward a programme with the hope of implementing it. One could merely do one's best and strive with the hope that the Government would be convinced by one's arguments. What the Indians wanted was equal representation on a common franchise, not on a communal basis. They did not seek universal suffrage as the European currently enjoyed or even property representation. They sought equality without any desire of domination. Nor had they any wish to deprive the Fijians of their position. There was the inevitable reference to Salisbury's despatch and its guarantee, and a complaint about the disparity of representation. Perhaps most interesting were his final comments that the acceptance of communal franchise in Fiji would be detrimental to Indians in Kenya. This gave an intimation that Vishnu Deo and his group were viewing their constitutional claims in a much wider context. And this was brought home by his final 'Equal citizenship throughout the British Empire and Freedom in India'.

40 Fiji Samachar Sept. 1929.
41 Ibid.
42 C.S.O.6141/29.
The first part was understandable because of the prevailing disabilities of Indians in the various colonies and dominions. The second was strange because it meant that Vishnu Deo was taking up in Fiji the burden of the nationalists in India. Such a step was undiplomatic and tactless; it could do nothing but harm to the cause of the Indians in Fiji. If anything gave the semblance of Indian aspirations in Fiji being directed from abroad, this did.

Vishnu Deo was elected with an overwhelming majority. Out of 643 electors 594 voted and 419 of these favoured Vishnu Deo and only 162 were for Grant. Most of Grant's support must have come from a small personal following and an anti-Arya Samaj element. Some 139 ballot papers were issued at Suva. Many who did not live in that town and its suburbs must have come from the immediate environs such as Nasinu to vote in Suva. The composition of the Southern electorate was different from the other two in that most of those who qualified here were income earners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Southern</th>
<th>Northern &amp; Western</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income only</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property only</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property &amp; Income only</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total on the Electoral Roll</strong></td>
<td><strong>663</strong></td>
<td><strong>640</strong></td>
</tr>
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Those possessing income qualifications only comprised about 76% of the electorate in the South, but 50% in the North and West, and

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45 A count of voters from the roll in Suva and its suburbs gives 332, practically 50% of the total registration.
Of the three members elected Vishnu Deo was unquestionably the most able; he never left any doubt that he was to be the leader and spokesman. But even he was not wholly a free agent. Behind him stood two Gujarati lawyers S.B. Patel and A.D. Patel, who had arrived in Fiji in 1927 and 1928 respectively. According to McGusty, shortly to be made Secretary of Indian Affairs, these two had been 'delegated to guide local politicians into conformity of action with the advanced party 'nationalists' in India'. A.D. Patel was 'an adherent of Gandhi, and reported an extremist', while his compatriot S.B. Patel was 'by repute a moderate and reasonable man'. Of the attachment to Gandhian philosophy there can be no doubt. Every Gujarati shared a kinship with the greatest Gujarati of them all. Gandhi has always been granted a god-like adulation by the Gujaratis of Fiji, in his lifetime and subsequently. This loyalty has appeared to transcend all other attachments of the Gujaratis, except perhaps to their money. But it seems that S.B. Patel, at least, initially, was justifiably labelled a moderate. At a meeting in Lautoka on 13 October before the Legislative Council was convened and where both Vishnu Deo and Parmanand Singh were present, resolutions were passed on common roll, education and land. One G.R. Sahu Khan, a clerk of S.B. Patel, suggested that the Indian members should walk out of the Council if their motion was rejected in similar fashion to their counterparts in Kenya. This was deprecated by S.B. Patel and others present.

An initial step in the direction of unity had been the merging of the two Congress groups into one at a meeting in Lautoka on 11 October well before the Council met. Certainly Dr. Beattie would not have relished the action; he disapproved of the Patels

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46 Figures deduced from the 1929 Indian Electoral Rolls.
47 Minute, 29 Nov. 1929; C.S.O.4942/29.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 C.S.O.289/30.
for they signified the end of his influence. Even among the Indian Christians, who tended to remain aloof from their heathen brethren and leaned towards things and views European, disillusionment was apparent. The defeat of John Grant must have awakened them sharply to their isolation from their own kind. Never fully accepted by Europeans, who kept social contact with them to a minimum, they found themselves in a situation akin to the laundryman's donkey in the Indian proverb. At a meeting in Suva on 27 October they founded their own Christian Society, reasoning that they could advance no further under missionary tutelage as their patrons wished to 'keep them under'.

There was then a tendency among certain elements in the Indian community to close ranks and put forward a united front. But there was one communal and religious group, already apprehensive of its position, whose leaders were convinced by the outcome of the election that as a minority they were in danger. This was the Muslim community; and henceforth their movement was in a separatist direction away from the attempts of their bête noire, the Arya Samaj, to unify the Indian population. The nature of Muslim politics will be the subject of another chapter, but here it ought to be noted that despite the efforts of the Patels and Vishnu Deo the Indian community was far from being a monolith. But in the remaining months of 1929 the Arya Samajis were not fully aware of the depth of Muslim anxiety and the plans to alleviate it; the Muslims were being cautious and discreet; not till the beginning of the following year did they divulge their strategy.

When the two country members, Parmanand Singh and J.R.R.Mahraj arrived in Suva to take their seats they were accompanied by S.B.Patel who acted as adviser to all three Indian members. Some indication of Indian tactics was evident from the presence of Patel. The Secretary of Indian Affairs interpreted it as a determination 'to make their attack on the franchise their immediate and practically their sole aim'. Whether by their free choice or by the fiat of their Arya Samaj leaders, the three Indian

51 C.S.O.4942/29.
52 C.P.33/30.
members were to act in constant consultation with Patel. To a certain extent this was understandable. Patel was an educated lawyer who had travelled extensively in Europe and had been a close associate of Gujarati politicians, Gandhi and Desai. He possessed knowledge of the Parliamentary system, its workings and procedures; and his education had given him breadth of mind and experience which the three members lacked. Since they were to confront in the Council others who were their superiors in education and the language of the debates, they needed assistance. Political advice can never be devoid of the bias of the giver, and it was inevitable that Patel would influence the Indian members.

Guessing the likely trend of events, the Secretary of Indian Affairs chose to intervene. For several days he conducted a daily discussion with Vishnu Deo and his colleagues, endeavouring to dissuade them from their avowed goal. His requests that they take the chance to show their ability in the Council and that they defer discussion on the franchise were rejected. Their response was always the same; that communal franchise implied inferiority and they must remove this anomaly. They adopted the same posture in an informal meeting with the European elected members, accept common roll first and then they would be willing to discuss other things.

In the initial stage the action proposed was that the members would move a motion calling for the adoption of common roll and if it were defeated they would resign. But as yet there was no plan for an indefinite boycott of the Legislative Council. From the candidates who had opposed them at the election they had obtained the guarantee that they would not stand against them in any second election caused by their resignation. They would return unopposed and co-operate and after a lapse of some time they would re-introduce their franchise motion.

The new Council convened on 25 October but it was not till 5 November that the Indian members introduced their motion. The

55 L.C.Debates 1929:182.
56 C.S.O.289/30.
first shots in the episode were fired by Sir Maynard Hedstrom. In his address of welcome to the Indians on the first day, he sounded a warning on the constitution and in his speech he laid down the conditions for European co-operation with the Indians. Repeated utterances by the European councillors and the press left no room for doubt in any mind, least of all in that of the Indian. He preached how the Indians ought to conduct themselves, otherwise they would be working against the interests of the Colony. He told the Indians that one basic principle remained unchanged and that had been restated by the White Paper, *Indians in Kenya*. It concerned the paramountcy of native interests. Secondly, control of policy and legislation ultimately rested with the Secretary of State. As a consequence of these restrictions 'democratic ideals can have but little place in this Council'. At no stage had Indian politicians stated otherwise. Even before they had spoken the Indians were suspected of demagoguery and revolutionary ideals, according to the definition and standards of Hedstrom and his colleagues. Had the Governor or an official spoken similar words in like tone in welcoming the first European elected members to the same Council in 1905 they would certainly have expressed indignation. After the European clamour of the nineteenth century, the profuse vituperation showered on Gordon and his successors, the denunciation of their native and land policies, the agitation for federation in collusion with Seddon, a Governor, with some justification might have laid down the guidelines as to what was in the interests of the Colony and how the newly-elected members might work towards achievement of these goals. To do so would have been contrary to the democratic practice which Hedstrom himself in his early years had championed. But Hedstrom, Scott and their colleagues were afflicted with both myopia and colour-blindness. They could not see beyond what they regarded as their sacred right and privilege and the need to perpetuate these; reactionaries are rarely men of vision. Their own interests were always equated with those of the Colony, even when they demanded the unrestricted sale of native land. Anything

57 L.C. Debates 1929:104-105.
else was denounced as disastrous. They, as elected representatives of the Europeans, claimed a right to voice the aspirations of those who had chosen them, this right they jealously guarded. But the Indian must not serve one section of the community, he must always be sensitive to the interests of the Colony. Yet the Indians made no immediate attempt to retaliate, choosing to ignore Hedstrom at this stage.

The first twelve days of Indian representation in the Council were distinguished by the number of questions, each with several sub-divisions. Of these the three Indian members tabled 108 and their six European counterparts 57. The Indian queries traversed a wide range and sometimes sought minute detail. Every matter affecting the community where a sense of grievance or injustice was thought to exist, where facilities were thought inadequate or discriminatory, was raised. Education, land, the franchise, municipal affairs, residential tax, on all these the Government was required to furnish information. Ordinarily the Government would have objected to the detail required and the tone of some of the questions. But there was a willingness to oblige and no wish to offend. The Government wanted to allay the Indians' suspicions and keep them in a mood to co-operate. The Indian members could have taken advantage of this flexibility and used the information from the official answers to move motions concerning the socio-economic difficulties that their people were facing. No attempt was made either to take such an initiative themselves or to contribute their share to other issues debated. They had ample opportunity, for during their short sojourn the Council discussed among other things the education rating bill, maintenance of certain roads and bridges and a loan policy for these, prison regulations, refund on sugar duties, provincial schools and the Tailevu Dairy Scheme. All were issues where the Indians could have participated if for no other reason than to introduce ideas on how their own community might benefit. Silence on these occasions was a gross neglect of duty and short-sightedness. Tactically it was a colossal blunder. If it was done at the
behest of outside advice, whether from within or without the Colony, then such advice was ill-conceived. It displayed a lack of reality and appreciation of the situation. Had the Indian members made some contribution other than merely asking numerous questions, they might have encountered less hostility later towards themselves and their supporters. If Hedstrom by his strong words appeared to be spoiling for a fight, the Indians by their obstinacy and inflexibility were making certain that a collision occurred.

On 5 November Vishnu Deo moved his famous motion:

(a) that political rights and status granted to Indian settlers in this Colony on racial lines are not acceptable to them, and
(b) that Indians in Fiji should be granted Common Franchise along with other British subjects resident in the Colony. 58

His arguments in support were simple. Communal franchise segregated Indians from Europeans and conflicted with the pledge given by the Fiji Government that Indians would be treated on a basis of equality with other races. There was the inevitable reference to Lord Salisbury’s despatch and a quotation from the Hilton Young Commission that 'the ideal to be aimed at is a common electoral roll on equal franchise with no discrimination between the races'. Vishnu Deo was of the opinion that communal franchise led to racial friction. He discounted Hedstrom's fears about the dangers to the primacy of native interests. Common roll would not undermine this policy nor would it conflict with the Deed of Cession, which was in no way abrogated by the existing elective principle. In fact, Fijians would benefit from a common franchise. Indians had no desire to dominate or impose their civilization on anyone. In British Guiana common roll was functioning satisfactorily; there was no reason why it should not do so in Fiji. He denied that they were demagogues or obstructionists or men of immoderate and revolutionary ideas. All he sought was that they 'pull together for the benefit of the Empire'.

In support Farmanand Singh referred to the fact that Indians along with Europeans had helped develop Fiji. 60 He pointed out that

58 ibid:176.
59 ibid:179-180.
60 ibid:180-181.
Fiji was not a self-governing Dominion 'and the political equality in the Crown Colonies is not based on the principle of equity'. And it was not possible to maintain the Empire while denying equality to Indians.

The Acting Colonial Secretary for the Government, and Ratu Pope Seniloli for the Fijians, expressed satisfaction with the Constitution and against the motion without stating their reasons.

The supporters of the motion put forward no new arguments but these, nonetheless, drew lengthy rebuttals from Hedstrom and Scott. Hedstrom contended that the European members could not be expected to support a system that would in the future bring about the loss of their political rights; they would be swamped by the Indians. Nor would Fijians want a change of masters. The British race had shown itself capable of ruling other peoples where the Indians had not in the past shown themselves capable of governing even themselves. Indians had 'a good deal to learn politically and in other ways, and you cannot hurry evolution'. Most of the Indians who came to Fiji were 'from Calcutta streets', and came 'because of their own utter poverty'; they had done well in the Colony and were better off here than they could have been at home, and he thought they had 'every right and every privilege that British subjects had... which can be granted to them without harm or danger to the Fijian race'.

Henry Scott took the stand that if Indians were granted common roll then so would the Fijians, but they were not ready for it. He reiterated the fear of Indian domination and warned that there could be only one alteration from the present franchise and that would be a reversion to the nominated system, for which he received the applause of the Council. The common roll movement had not originated in Fiji but had been deliberately brought from India by certain emissaries living in Fiji 'not for the betterment of the Indian community, but their own aggrandisement, political and otherwise'. The other four European elected members merely rose to support their two senior colleagues. In his reply Vishnu Deo said nothing of

61 ibid:181-186.
note besides pointing out that though Indian qualifications to vote were lower than those for Europeans there were only 1,404 Indian electors to 1,356 Europeans. If, as they sought, the qualifications were made identical it was unlikely that 200 Indians would be eligible. He disagreed with Scott about the readiness of Fijians; he thought that they could cope with common roll.

The result of the debate was expected. Only the three Indian members favoured it, the other twenty-two opposed it. Vishnu Deo responded that since the common cause of the Empire had received such a cold reception future co-operation was futile. Accompanied by his two colleagues he walked out of the Council chamber. The melodrama had ended.

Once they had taken the ultimate plunge the onus was on the Indian members themselves to make the next move. First, there were public meetings. On 6 November in the Town Hall before a predominantly Gujarati audience S.B. Patel approved of a boycott of the Council. Next the National Congress of Fiji was formed with headquarters at Lautoka and a committee chosen by S.B. Patel and Vishnu Deo; this also saw the demise of the Beattie organization.

After the walk-out the leaders had promptly despatched a telegram to Gandhi informing him of the failure of the common roll motion. In reply he congratulated the three members for resigning in protest and hoped that they would abide by their decision and not seek re-election until their demand had been met. He advised:

United effort and agitation will surely bring about relief at an early period but whether it comes early or late it is perfectly useless to go to the Council unless this elementary thing is done. Please keep me informed of further developments.

Later Gandhi maintained that the Indians could not get what they

63 C.S.O.4942/29.
64 ibid. C.S.O.289/30.
65 Gandhi 1929-30:166.
66 ibid.
sought because 'that would be too much for the white exploiters of Indian labour'. 67 He did not think that Indian members elected by Indians only could have any influence in the Council. Hence those who had resigned deserved commendation for 'their patriotic spirit'. Having quit the Council, they ought not to sit idle but continue their agitation for simple justice, for 'if the Indian community in Fiji is well organized the citadel of anti-Indian prejudice is bound to break down through united effort'. 68 The advice was acceptable, and no nominations were forthcoming from the Indian community when writs were issued on 25 November for a fresh election to fill the vacancy. Consequently there were no Indians in the Council till the election of 1932.

The Acting Secretary of Indian Affairs believed that Pollack of the Servants of India Society in London had advised the boycott. 69 This is not unlikely because by 6 November S.B.Patel was thinking in these terms. But the Mahatma's instructions were the crucial ones. He was the Pope of the non-cooperationists and every word he spoke or wrote was accepted without demur as an ex-cathedra pronouncement by his disciples. The two Patels were to admit to the Secretary of Indian Affairs, according to the latter, that 'the present political situation is controlled more or less from India, and that it is dependent on the political situations in India and in Kenya'.

Both in his election address and in the Legislative Council Vishnu Deo gave the indication that what the Indians sought would have repercussions beyond Fiji. This broad perspective as well as aid from India were essential, though there were risks involved. Among these the most pernicious was to ignore the set of circumstances peculiar to Fiji and to interpret events and demands within a very general spectrum with the result that the details of the particular tended to be blurred or lost. Indeed this was the Gandhian fallacy. His philosophy was pertinent to the needs of the nationalists in India but was not of universal relevance. Even in India when Muslim-Hindu communal strife began to surface with regular frequency it was found wanting, not in terms of its values but its realism. On the Fijian scene it was no less unrealistic.

67 ibid:191.
68 ibid.
69 C.S.O.289/30.
Gandhi's failure to appreciate this sprang partly from his own belief in the innate goodness of human beings and his championing of the cause of overseas Indians. But given the successes of Gandhi in India and the very limited quality of Indian leadership in Fiji, the worship of Gandhian practices is understandable. Isolated in a Pacific archipelago, impoverished, and with limited opportunities for education, the Fiji-born Indians were unlikely at this stage of their history, especially in view of the rigours of their past, to produce leaders possessing originality of vision. Even if one had suddenly emerged he probably would have been stifled and muzzled by the hostile environment of the colonial situation, where the Scotts and Hedstroms would never have paid heed to him. Too much criticism cannot, therefore, be levelled at Vishnu Beo and his colleagues. The Patels too were the products of their environment; Gujeratis born in India and barely two years in Fiji, they too believed in the efficacy of their great countryman. As much dedicated to victory in India as in Fiji, their loyalty was divided. Hitherto, all the gains of the Fiji-Indians: the abolition of indenture, the bestowal of the franchise, had been achieved more by the efforts of India than their own; therefore, they were susceptible to outside pressures. On occasions Fiji-Indians were thoroughgoing in displaying oneness with their compatriots in India, as exemplified by the closing of shops and stopping the taxi service in Lautoka in condolence for Gandhi's arrest in India in 1922. Another instance was the holding of meetings in the same year as protest on the imprisonment of Nehru and V.Patel. The meetings were organized by A.D.Patel who was supposed to have told his audience that only the Hindus were suffering in India for the Muslims were siding with the Government. Such actions were liable to misinterpretation by members of the other communities, who as a result were liable to shout sedition at every Indian political activity or demand. The Indian community ran this risk by placing excessive confidence in India-born, India-orientated leaders whose attachment to Fiji was secondary. There was a failure both on the part of the Indians

70 C.S.O. CF51/9.
71 ibid.
72 ibid.
themselves and the other races to recognize that political goals in India and Fiji were totally different. Indian nationalists were seeking self-government or independence from colonial rule. Indians in Fiji desired equality of status within the colonial framework or within a constitution with a permanent official majority in the Legislative Council. By associating with India, and obtaining the aid of nationalist leaders there, Fiji-Indians weakened their own demands. It is doubtful whether they could have done otherwise amidst the seeming collusion of Government reluctance and European intransigence, with its failure to accept Indians as permanent residents whose aspirations needed reasonable fulfilment.

The apparent unity of the Indian voters, evidenced by the absence of even a single nomination left the Government more than disappointed. The Governor informed the Secretary of State that the Indians were contenting themselves with platitudes of brotherhood and equality and the claim that 'a common roll was the birthright of all Indians, and there was nothing more to be said'. They were acting on instructions from abroad, in his opinion, and he had it on good authority that Pollack was the man responsible. Despite this the Governor called a conference on 27 December at Government House to resolve the impasse.

Apart from the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, and the Secretary of Indian Affairs there were seven Indians present, an eighth though invited was allegedly too ill to attend and was granted an interview the following day. Those present were: S.B. Patel, A.D. Patel, Vishnu Deo, Parmanand Singh, John Grant, Sahodar Singh of the Pacific Press and Abdul Karim, a Muslim school teacher from Suva. Both sides reiterated their now familiar arguments. The Governor claimed that communal franchise was advantageous in a heterogeneous society while the Indians repeated that it implied racial inferiority and was productive of racial friction. Even the Muslim member of the delegation took this view but he later refused to sign a joint letter from his colleagues

73 Fletcher to C.O.Conf. 2 Jan.1930.
74 ibid.
75 C.S.O.289/30.
giving the Governor a formal answer in which they resolved in favour of common roll.

The refusal of the majority of the politically articulate Indians to co-operate on any terms other than common roll increased the hostility of others towards them. In the following months disunity appeared, the Muslims by the beginning of 1930 were openly against co-operation with Vishnu Deo and his Arya Samajis. The followers of John Grant, mainly Christians, and a few of the wealthier Hindu Indians were speaking of their dissatisfaction with Vishnu Deo and the Patels. Dr. Sagayam, who had absented himself from the conference on 27 December on account of illness, informed the Government that 98% of the Indians were totally ignorant of the motives of the few politically minded among them. How closely such a percentage approximated to the truth was difficult to deduce but it was accepted because it gave substance to the Government's own beliefs.

Part of the problem lay in the fact that the Government lived in a world completely cut off from the reality of Indian feeling. It was also too ready to encourage divisive groups, especially those against the Arya Samajis. And most remarkable were the beliefs of the two men who held consecutively the position of Secretary of Indian Affairs, Pearson and McGusty. The latter had long been in Fiji and exhibited greater prejudice, while the former, with experience in India, occasionally showed glimpses of true understanding. Pearson was the more realistic, his basic premise was:

The Indians are here. They cannot be ejected or forced to leave without a disastrous economic upheaval . . . and the prosperity of the Colony largely depends on them. Fiji had to adapt itself to the Indian presence. He was aware of the extreme view that the Indian had come to be a labourer and

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76 ibid. Sagayam had arrived in Fiji in 1925 from India where, according to the Government, he had been an extremist. His wife was described as a Russian Bolshevist determined to rectify the Indian position in Fiji. But on arrival in Fiji they found the conditions so favourable (according to the Secretary of Indian Affairs) that they chose to co-operate with the officials.

77 C.S.O. 5286/29.
must not arrogate to himself anything more or, at the most, be a small farmer growing crops for others. He must be kept in his place and if he did not like it despite his alleged advantages he could leave. While he had no sympathy for this attitude Pearson reflected his Indian Civil Service belief that India could not survive without Europeans and so would remain permanently in the Empire, hence Indians in Fiji could not be treated as aliens. Though he found no widespread desire among local Indians for clerical and sedentary jobs (most preferred mechanical or agricultural employment), he, nonetheless, desired that education for them ought to be provided locally especially in view of the Indian determination to obtain education to the extent of sending their children abroad. There was a danger that these would return 'disciples of advanced and impractical idealists to their own country'. Instead they should be taught what would make them useful citizens of Fiji. His memorandum ended advising tolerance towards Indian aspirations for policies which would ensure that they made Fiji their home. But he exhibited no willingness to accept Indians on equal terms with Europeans; they were distinct races with differing needs.

McGusty, who later succeeded Pearson, was less perceptive and more influenced by Fiji's colonial environment. His thinking on the issue resembled closely that of the European residents.

Given such attitudes dissatisfaction was inevitable. Race and status as causes of conflict were to become increasingly prominent with the growing dissemination of western education among the Indians. The stigma of inferiority was repugnant to the Indian. He chafed under it and grew bitter when, in his view, the administration failed to provide appropriate redress. According to the Colonial Secretary local opinion was unsympathetic to Indian aspirations in education and the franchise, and officials were placed at a disadvantage because Indians were suspicious of their efforts. But this was only half the problem. Indians distrusted European officials and considered them sympathetic to the attitudes of local Europeans. European civil servants and European residents

78 ibid.
79 ibid.
81 Minute by McGusty, 21 Dec. 1929; C.S.O. 5300/29.
82 Minute by Seymour, 18 Sept.1931; C.S.O. CF51/7.
met on social terms and each had the opportunity, at least, of listening to the viewpoint of the other away from the formal rigidity of official meetings and discussions. From such social contacts with Europeans the Indians were cut off. They were thus unable to initiate any change towards their community via this medium. Those few Indians who deemed themselves educated aspired to social intercourse with Europeans. The latter generally refused to countenance this on grounds that it was beneath their dignity to allow Indians to mix with them as social equals. The Indians considered their exclusion to be based on race and thus unpalatable. The Secretary of Indian Affairs, Pearson, who though opposed to 'intimate social relations' between races admitted 'what is wanted is social contact in some form and recognition that there is a class of Indian society with which this is possible'. In practice this did not eventuate to any significant degree. For the Europeans, especially local residents, Indians were Indians be they educated or illiterate. And in any case if an Indian were educated then there was all the more reason to ensure he realized always in his dealings with Europeans that he was an Indian and ought to remain in the station appointed for him.

The agitation for common roll and equal status, the boycott of the Council, association with Indian nationalists, all these reinforced existing prejudices against the Indian community in general and the leaders in particular. Concessions for the betterment of the Indians had always been very grudgingly made by the European leaders. After the events of late 1929, their niggardliness intensified as shown by their united clamour when Government proposed to spend £10,000 on the education of Indians. Despite the doubts that the issue of Indian franchise had involved the British had made this momentous grant. But the behaviour of the first elected Indians in the Legislative Council left behind distaste and indignation in others. Men such as Murchison Fletcher and McGusty who had regarded the Indians as a contented, prosperous and successful community were dismayed and

83 C.S.O. CF51/13Pt1.

84 Fiji Samachar Dec. 1929. See for instance, Telegram of European Elected Members to Secretary of State, Lord Passfield in L.C.Debates 1929, 240-41.
disappointed. The response of the Indian politicians they found less than generous and futile. They hoped that the franchise, which was a political concession, would be utilized sensibly for the socio-economic advancement of both the Indians and the colony. The demand for majority rule which common roll implied was for them unrealistic as it foreshadowed the paramountcy of the Indian with the concomitant subordination of the interests of others to the detriment of the welfare of Fiji. And it displayed a disregard of British obligations to the Fijian people.

Given the Indians' persecution complex and their acute feeling of injustice, whether rightly or wrongly, they tended to see constitutional problems from a very narrow perspective. They were inclined to see it merely from their own vantage point, to the exclusion of others' views. Their myopia deprived them of the realization that they were only one component in the colony's plural society. Particularly, it deprived them of a full appreciation of the Fijian position repeatedly stated by the leaders of that community. The Indians insistent in their demands upon official time and resources either ignored or failed to grasp that the British had firm obligations to the Fijian people. Colonial Governors and officials had frequently professed the paramountcy of Fijian interests in the colony and this doctrine had been proclaimed specifically for East Africa and the Empire generally in 1923. And in this narrative in order to put the picture in its correct focus it is imperative to examine Fijian aspirations.

AFTER earlier reluctance Britain accepted the offer of Cession from the Tui Viti and other chiefs in 1874 because she could find no other effective way of exercising her authority over the activities of European settlers, largely British, whose numbers in the archipelago had rapidly increased in the late eighteen sixties and early seventies. Though Cession had been an unconditional surrender of their property and rights and those of their people by the signatory chiefs to the British Crown and its heirs, the Deed of Cession came to be regarded as a covenant between the British Crown and the Fijian people. The first substantive Governor of the Colony, Sir Arthur Gordon (1875-1880) institutionalized for native administration the system adopted by Sir Hercules Robinson and laid down the guidelines for a native policy which was never radically altered. Sir Everard im Thurn was the only one of Gordon's successors to attempt to change a major aspect of his policy regarding land but the measure proved temporary and abortive. Though im Thurn expressed doubts about the Fijian communal system and native taxation scheme, he did nothing to alter these beyond calling on chiefs for a greater effort towards individualism. Im Thurn showed no wish either to destroy the separate native administration or to subjugate Fijian interests to those of other communities.

The basic structure of native administration remained the same throughout British rule. The Colony was divided into provinces, districts and villages, varying in number at different times, and

2 Gordon's policy is adequately examined in Legge 1958:151-283, and Chapman 1964. The various views on the origins of the native administration in Fiji and its workings are discussed in the above and also in Roth 1953:134-163; France 1969; C.P.13/59.
3 France 1969:149-164.
each with its own council and indigenous official. None of these councils had legislative powers but it was their function to enforce laws and regulations made by superior authorities. The Provincial Council, however, was responsible for the budget of its province, largely derived from the annual levy paid by its people. One could say that the Fijian people, through their various taxes, paid for their own administration. At the apex stood the Council of Chiefs; it too was advisory but its recommendations carried great weight both with the Fijian people and with the Governor and his bureaucracy. On occasions its advice was not accepted by the colonial regime but the rejection always carried an explanation. Though generally known as the Council of Chiefs, membership of this august body was not confined to this group. Because the colonial administration employed commoners as bulis, provincial scribes or native stipendiary magistrates and later those trained as native medical practitioners, this class found its way into the Council of Chiefs. And it always included nominated representatives from the provinces. Nevertheless, the traditional rulers were always in a majority in the Council which became the mouthpiece of the Fijian people.

The officials of the Fijian administration were salaried servants of the Crown. Though in the upper echelons chiefs predominated, these were not always assigned to areas over which they had customary overlordship. Making chiefs salaried officials meant they were no

5 Sometimes there was conflict when an outsider was appointed as shown in Scarr 1970:3-31. In 1913 Ratu Kadavu Levu, a grandson of Cakobau, misappropriated funds and was relieved of the Rokoship of Tailevu and replaced by Joni Madraiwiwi; an action which caused some resentment in that province. Governor Sir Henry May told the Colonial Office (Conf. 30 June 1911; C.0.83/101) that Rokus appointed to various provinces were as a rule high chiefs and selected because of their personal influence over the people, an attribute necessary for the execution of such tasks as housebuilding and village sanitation. And such an official was useful to the Government only while his influence lasted. Sometimes by his actions a Roko lost this influence and therefore his usefulness and had to be removed. But as these men were 'subsidized native chiefs' it was essential that once 'removed from office they shall not be entirely alienated from the Government'. Otherwise they might coerce levies from those below. Hence their past service ought not to be ignored and despite dismissal from office they ought to be given allowances to retain their loyalty. C.O. to May, Conf. 16 Sept. 1911, accepted this principle. In 1904 im Thurn had warned Kadavu Levu against selfishness noting in his diary that dismissal would mean 'not only disgrace but loss of pay and advantages equivalent to something like £1,500 p.a.' Diary entry, 26 Oct. 1904.
longer wholly dependent on traditional restraints. But in the absence of detailed colony-wide research on chiefly rule under the British assessment of it must be cautious. Certain factors need emphasis. Being a chief implied being able to live like one; being able to display generosity especially in one's subjects' times of need. And a chief restricted by a monthly salary and fixed extras, such as from land rents, often found himself in financial embarrassments, sometimes having to utilize public funds in his trust. The chiefly system was based on tribute and under British rule chiefs were permitted to retain some privileges of service from those below them; sometimes these were abused; sometimes loopholes in the regulations permitted abuses. The Government when aware of these took action and expressly forbade and punished over-exploitation. It would be unfair to brand chiefly rule under Britain as widespread slavery or total tyranny as some critics claimed. There was no widespread rebellion against it, though discontent was periodically evident as will be mentioned later; it cannot be denied that the system gave greater protection to the chiefs who manned the bureaucracy than to the commoners who were governed by it.

The native administration quickly became an imperium in imperio and the Fijians once it became so established wished to retain it. When in 1916 the Native Department was abolished and its work in the provinces handed over to European commissioners and stipendiary magistrates, and when for a short term (1921-1923) there was no Secretary of Native Affairs, Fijians objected. The Council of Chiefs made clear at its 1923 meeting its concern that the action had been taken without prior consultation with it and that it was distinctly

6 Williams 1858:42, wrote: 'Chiefs of power exact largely and give liberally, only a small portion of what they receive remaining in their own hands.'

7 Fell to C.O.Conf. 15 Feb. 1924, speaks of the removal from office of a chief for defalcation after he had given the Government 26 years of loyal service. Later this chief made very effort to repay all that had been lost through his negligence. Seymour to C.O. Conf. 26 June 1931.

8 Helliet, Natovi, 25 Oct. 1928. P.M.B.457. Some chiefs regarded these services as part of their remuneration and were prepared to surrender them provided they received an equivalent increase in their salary. (im Thurn Diary, 11 April 1905.)

9 Barrow 1921, and 1922.
unhappy with the new arrangement.  

Indeed rokos, bulis and the various councils were not affected by the change, but the Fijian leaders sought the reservation of a separate department concentrating solely on their affairs.

In these matters the Council of Chiefs took the dominant role. It both formulated and voiced the opinion of the Fijian people in all matters, political, economic, and social. Therefore it was natural that it should be the first to consider the question of Fijian representation in the Legislative Council making a pronouncement as early as 1880.

The Roko Tui Ba at that Council of Chiefs meeting, in his complaint that there were Europeans in Fiji who took little or no interest in the work of the chiefs and frequently misconstrued matters to deceive the Fijian people, added:

Now my question is whether one of us would be allowed to enter the Bose vaka Matanitu (Legislative Council). At present it would appear that we are kept at a distance. There are matters that have been discussed there, the importance of which is only known to ourselves; for instance our rights to and ownership of the various reefs which have belonged to us from all past times down to the present. Strangers are not aware of this fact and they dispute our rights to them.

According to the report of the proceedings of this Council a lengthy discussion took place on the subject but unfortunately there is no record of what was said and by whom. But apparently there was some consensus of opinion because the chiefs submitted a resolution to the Governor that one of their number be permitted to attend the sittings of the Legislative Council. The resolution, though lengthy, does deserve quoting in full as it is the first public expression of the Fijian leaders on the issue and displays an acute appreciation of the political process which controlled their destiny:

There is one thing we wish to represent to your Excellency respecting our discussions. What we discuss, we see and understand ourselves, as well as its usefulness to ourselves. We also know and understand your Excellency's true mindedness to us in our work but there are some things that are not so clear, some that are spoken of as English law which seem to be different or against us, and create in our minds a feeling that there is a hindrance which renders or may render our discussion and condition of our affairs of little use. One thing is that it may be neither we nor the manners and customs of our land are understood. There is one thing we wish to represent to your

Excellency. You will then see whether it be good or not. Our request is that if it be admissible that one of us taukei should enter the Legislative Council. Some of our thoughts on the matter are that such a person would be able to explain and make clear many things that are not clear when laws are being discussed, that have some application to us or to some of our affairs. He would be able to explain what would be useful to us and what should be understood by us. As our Bose is drawing to a close, we shall soon return to our homes. We know and feel the importance of many things that we wish to represent to your Excellency. It is a weighty matter to us, as to whether what we have discussed will be carried out, knowing as we do its suitability to us. It is said abroad, 'What is the object of your Bose? Others govern you. What you discuss and decide upon does not become law; there is another Bose that alone makes laws, not you.' There are many amongst us who remain quiet and indifferent as to how matters affecting the land or the people go. The effect of this also we fear, as it lessens the importance of our Bose. For this and many other reasons we think it would be useful if one of us were in the Legislative Council.

The Governor's reply was tepid: 'This is well. I had already thought of this matter and will arrange that the taukei interest shall be represented in the Bose, in accordance with your request.' Although the request was for a Fijian to be their spokesman, the Governor's reply indicates that his nominee would be an official, and therefore a European. In fact it was to be the Native Commissioner.

There the matter rested until Governor Jackson recommended constitutional change. He favoured, and the Colonial Office accepted, the selection of two representatives by the Governor from a list of names recommended by the Council of Chiefs. The method was not only indirect representation for the Fijian people but also the Governor made the final choice. Even the most popular candidates nominated by the chiefs were not automatically granted seats in the Legislative Council. Since records of voting on this matter in the Council of Chiefs are virtually non-existent it is difficult to assess how often this occurred, but there were instances. Both in 1926 and 1928 the

11 Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs. 1880. Hereafter all references to the Council of Chiefs meetings are drawn from these proceedings of the relevant years unless otherwise stated. These proceedings of the Council of Chiefs were not published separately until 1923; thereafter they appeared as Legislative Council Papers. The National Archives of Fiji, however, has two collated volumes of the Minutes of the Council of Chiefs from its first meeting.
The appointment of chiefs to the Legislative Council in 1905 and thereafter did not lead to a general political awakening of the Fijians, though as before they remained conscious of what affected their own community. Even in the Council of Chiefs it caused no great jubilation, rather a formal expression of thanks to the Governor for his action. Early it became accepted as a function that that Council had to perform. It cannot be regarded as having contributed in any way to Fijian political development for it registered no impact on the mass of the population. Nor did those nominated contribute anything substantial; they cast their votes, usually with the officials. In fact, they were themselves officials, paid servants of the Government in the Fijian administration. Their inaction did not pass unnoticed for in the Council of Chiefs on 25 May 1914 the following discussion took place:

**Ratu Joni Mataitini:** I wish to ask what good our representatives Ratu Joni Madraiwiti, Ratu Rabici and Ratu Kadavulevu have done us. They never speak and we do not see that they do anything to safeguard our interests.

**Ratu Joni Madraiwiti:** What can we do? We are only two, but we give our votes.

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12 On both occasions Joni Mataitini received the highest number of votes and Epeli Ganilau was next but the latter was bypassed for Deve Toganivalu. The voting in 1928 was as follows: Joni Mataitini 37, Epeli Ganilau 35, Deve Toganivalu 32, Pope Seniloli 31, J.L.V.Sukuna 22, F. Veli 20. The Governor, Sir Eyre Hutson, wished to appoint Sukuna because of his education and qualifications which would enable him to serve his people. But Sukuna pointed out that the Fijian people would not understand his being chosen over Pope Seniloli, grand-son of Cakobau, and if he accepted it would adversely affect his standing in Fijian society. (C.S.O. 5553/28). Later in 1929 when Fijian membership was increased to three, it was Pope Seniloli who was chosen. Sukuna, despite his credentials, did not obtain a seat in the Legislative Council until November 1932. Though his name was among the group recommended by the Council of Chiefs for some time, the Governor in view of Fijian tradition and Sukuna's position in the Fijian hierarchy could not select him till that date. Sukuna was the grandson of Ratu Mara, the Chief defeated at Kaba and subsequently hanged as a rebel. However, Sukuna's father, Ratu Joni Madraiwiti must rank as one of the ablest chiefs and rikos; he was Roko Tui Ra, Bua and Tailevu and served in the Legislative Council from 1905 till his death in December 1920.
Ratu Kadavulevu: They are of no use to us. We should have one who can really speak, read and write English. We should have one European and one native representative. Let us petition the King to alter the Letters Patent. We will pay our representative.

Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi: I am not in favour of that. We have the Native Commissioner to safeguard our interests, and he can speak for us.

Ratu Sevanaca Seniloli: If we had a European it would seem as if we wished to ignore the Native Department.

Ratu Joni Mataitini: I did not mean to suggest that we should do without the Native Office.

The Native Commissioner explained that this was a matter for discussion later on. In the meantime the Letters Patent provided for the appointment of two members in a certain manner and the Council must follow the course laid down.

The subject was not dropped for two days later, on 27 May Ratu Kadavulevu, seconded by Ratu Joni Mataitini, tabled the following motion:

That it is the desire of this Council to petition His Majesty King George V to amend the Letters Patent in so far as they affect the appointment of the Legislative Council and that provision may be made for the appointment of one European representative and one native able to speak, read and understand English. The natives will be responsible for the salary of the European.

Speaking in support the mover stated:

The Native Members are unable to speak in the Legislative Council or to represent native feeling. No Fijian has sufficient education at present. We would get more satisfaction and support from a paid European representative, and if after the end of three years the experiment did not prove a success we could then return to the present system. By that time we might have one of ourselves able to take up the duty.

But he encountered formidable opposition, led by Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, who advised:

It would not make us more independent but rather the reverse. What we should aim at was not to spend £450 a year (the amount of salary suggested by the mover) in paying a European representative but to educate our own people up. Better spend the £450 a year in sending one or two of our own young men abroad for further education.

Apart from saying that Ratu Sevanaca Seniloli and others spoke in opposition, the proceedings of the Council report no further on the debate. When the vote was taken only 14 supported the motion and over 50 opposed it.
During the next few years the performance of the Fijian members did not undergo any radical transformation. And at the Council of Chiefs in 1920 there was again reference made to political representation, first of all by the Governor in his opening address:

The office of membership of the Legislative Council is a responsible one and in the selection of your nominees you will be best guided by bearing in mind the names of those of you who have in the past shown themselves capable and keen in promoting and leading native opinion in all matters appertaining to the general welfare and the good name of the native inhabitants of these islands.

Governor Rodwell took the opportunity of praising the advice and assistance given to him on Fijian affairs by Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi and Ratu Rabici who had been in the Legislative Council for 15 and 7 years respectively. The Chiefs replied that they regarded their task of selection as 'an important and difficult thing because there are but few of us who know and speak and read English as is required by the law'. That there was disquiet was evident from the Governor's own reply in the end to the Chiefs:

I am not altogether satisfied that the object of native representation in the Council, which is to afford an opportunity for the open expression of native views on matters affecting the native welfare is adequately secured by the existing provisions of the Constitution. The matter is receiving my consideration. Whatever may be decided as to the future, I should be reluctant now to make a change which would involve the displacement of either of the two chiefs above mentioned /Madraiwiwi and Rabici/, who have served your interests so long and so faithfully and have once more been nominated. 13

The Governor's statement indicates caution and an unwillingness to experiment, plus a preference for tried and experienced men.

That Chiefs at their 1920 Council were anxious about the franchise is evident from a despatch written by the Officer Administering the Government, T.E.Fell, in the following year.14 Essentially the

13 The names submitted by the Council were: P.E.Seniloli, Joni C.Mataitini, Deve Toganivalu, Ilisoni Waqanivavalagi, J.A.Rabici, J.Madraiwiwi. Among 14 others who received votes as well were, J.L.V.Sukuna, Savanaca Seniloli, Epeli Ganilau. That Sukuna did not get into the first six might indicate that western education was not regarded by the chiefly elite as the all-important qualification to represent the Fijian people. Besides, in Sukuna's case, the difficulty might also have been compounded by the fact that his father (Joni Madraiwiwi) was still available and the Governor had already expressed a preference for him; the chiefs could not be expected to trust all interests to the safe keeping of the one family, who in any case, was not preeminent in the traditional hierarchy.

14 Fell to C.O.Conf. 23 Dec. 1921.
concern was a consequence of discussions to grant the right to vote to the Indian community. Although the Fijian was not a politician by nature, argued Fell, and did not want the franchise, at the Council of Chiefs (1920) some were of the opinion that Fijians should be permitted to vote. Fell did not think the Fijian commoner would appreciate this right, as it was foreign to his nature, and he might become the tool of political agitators, resulting in complete change in his 'social comity'. He feared the remote danger of an alliance between certain elements in the Indian and Fijian population which would ultimately put political power in the hands of the former. This the Fijian chiefs would see as betrayal and a risk to their birthright. That there was some validity in Fell's assessment of possible Fijian reaction becomes evident from later events.

Fell also informed the Colonial Office that certain Europeans were instilling in Fijian minds the fear that their race would be in danger if political concessions were made to Indians as would be demanded by the proposed commission from India. He submitted a letter from an old settler, J.J.Ragg from Lautoka to Pope Seniloli, who had transmitted it to his superiors. Ragg told the Fijians that Indians intended to usurp their land and replace British rule. Letters, like Ragg's, were aimed at preventing Fijian-Indian amity as this might operate against European interests. But Ragg's action was not an isolated one; a Catholic priest in Ba, Rev. Yves Helliet, was accused of inciting Fijians in his district to call a meeting to oppose Indian franchise; official intervention thwarted his advice. In Ba Fijians had been disturbed for some

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15 Three chiefs, J.A.Rabici (Roko Tui Cakaudrove), P.E.Seniloli (Roko Tui Tailevu), A.Savanaca Seniloli (Assistant Native Lands Commissioner), asked in a letter of 16 Nov. 1921 to the Colonial Secretary that a meeting of the Council of Chiefs be called early in 1922 to discuss this question. Their request was not granted.

16 Ragg to Seniloli, 23 Nov. 1921, encl. Fell to C.O.Conf. 23 Dec.1921.

17 There is evidence to show that there was some Fijian sympathy for the Indian strike of 1921 until official and European missionary efforts persuaded Fijians to aid European employers. Helliet to Nicolas, 23 April 1923. P.M.B.466. Provincial Commissioner, Lautoka and Nadi, 24 March 1921; C.S.O. 2679/21.

time by rumours of the likelihood of 60,000 Indians migrating to Fiji and about equal status for Indians with Europeans. The Acting Provincial Commissioner there, deciding to call a Provincial Council meeting to discuss the Indian question, had his action deprecated by his superiors in Suva. The Fijians present seemed resentful about the grant of the franchise to Indians but they were assured that their interests under the Deed of Cession would be fully protected.

Though Europeans attempted to arouse Fijians politically, too much must not be made of it. The Fijians did not need European prompting; they were quite alive to events in their own country and their leaders were not hesitant in drawing the Government's attention to their position, Ratu Epeli Ganilau, Roko Tui Ra, was an example. His contentions can be summarized: (1) Most Fijians were opposed to equal status for Indians. (2) Fiji became a British possession 'by peaceful and voluntary consent' not by conquest. (3) If any move toward equality was contemplated then the rokos and chiefs must be consulted. (4) If Indians were to be given equality with Europeans then Fijians were entitled to a first claim. (5) British rule had been undisrupted because of Fijian reliance on British justice and fairness. (6) Government was aware of Fijian loyalty as displayed during the recent war. (7) Recent Indian strikes had shown the 'disloyal and mutinous spirits' of the Indians. (8) Fijians would thus resent equal status for Indians. (9) 'It is quite familiar to us that the majority of Indians in Fiji are from the lowest class or caste in India and we, as natives of this country,

19 C.S.O. 1282/22. Helliet to Nicolas, 23 April 1922. P.M.B.466. These rumours began before the arrival of Raju and his colleagues early in 1922 and continued during their visit which was widely reported in the press and regarded with anxiety and resentment both by Europeans and Fijians. The Fiji Times, 6 and 8 March 1922 carried articles on 'Fijian Protest', described as exaggerated by the Acting District Commissioner of Ba (C.S.O. 1274/22). The Raju Deputation was supposed to have been told by some bulis at Nadi that Fijians were not hostile to Indians and the Ba affair was instigated by Europeans. Minute, Fell, 6 April 1922; C.S.O. 1282/22.

20 C.S.O. 1282/22.

21 ibid. At this stage there was a movement among Europeans in North-Western Viti Levu to encourage the migration of Europeans to Fiji.

22 Epeli Ganilau to Col.Sec. 23 Feb. 1922; C.S.O. C13/22.
would not like to see them on a higher social and political level than we are in our native country.' (10) Fijians deprecated political rights for Indians as they had no wish to be ruled by them. The enfranchisement of Indians and equal status were thus interpreted as political domination by them of the other races. While this conclusion was not wholly correct it was perhaps a justifiable deduction from several factors. First was the anti-Indian campaign of the European press, frequently cited in this study. Second was the inability of the Government to enunciate clearly the nature of political rights and equal status to be bestowed upon Indians. This was partly a consequence of having to wait for instructions from the Colonial Office which in turn was delayed by its consultation with the Indian Government and the India Office. Third, the strikes of 1920 and 1921, the new Indian assertion in Fiji, reportage in Fiji of nationalistic (and anti-British) fervour in India, all made Fijians suspicious of Indian aspirations.

Anxiety on the franchise issue was not confined to chiefs alone. At this stage there seemed some unrest and dissatisfaction among Fijians; the Government blamed this on the recent Indian strikes and political agitators sowing distrust of the colonial regime's Indian policy.23 A commoner and former member of the Fiji Transport Corps, and currently teacher at the Methodist Mission training school at Davuilevu, wrote to the Government stressing the following:

(1) Fijians were upset on learning that Indians would be permitted to elect their own representatives to the Legislative Council but not the Fijians. He asked why this privilege could not also be accorded the Fijians. (2) If Indians were granted the franchise they would forge ahead politically while Fijians would appear humiliated in the eyes of all in their own country.24 The official

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23 Rodwell to C.O.Conf. 25 May 1922. The despatch was the result of a communication from Rev.A.Small, Chairman of the Methodist Mission in Fiji to the Acting Governor (Fell), 14 March 1922. With its network of native ministers and catechists the Methodist Church had a very good intelligence system on Fijian affairs. Small blamed the unrest not merely on the Indian trouble but also on the existing system of Fijian administration; he concluded, 'unrest and dissatisfaction widely prevail and the idle are more easily tempted to indulge in such vices as drinking and gambling.'

24 Mosese Buadromo to Col.Sec. 12 July 1923; C.S.O. 2765/23.
reply attempted to rationalize away the anomaly. Fijians lived on a communal basis, it was argued, and circumstances affecting them were local rather than general. Moreover, Fijians were governed along their own traditional lines and under the prevailing system enjoyed 'a very large measure of self-government'. For instance, in their district (tikina) councils every man had a voice; they were fully represented in their Provincial Councils; and in the Council of Chiefs all matters of general importance were considered first-hand by the Governor himself. Other communities did not possess these privileges. Fijians chose Legislative Councillors, through the Council of Chiefs, who aided Government in the affairs of the Colony. The voting system was 'strange to native ideal' and based on qualifications which could not be made to apply 'to native Fijians in the present state of development'. Not all Indians would be granted the franchise, only those who possessed certain educational, property and income qualifications. By contrast every Fijian had the right to exercise his voice through the various councils already mentioned. Thus enfranchising Indians only was not denigrating Fijians. Through the existing system the Fijian people, their chiefs and the Government were all linked; without it the interests of each would suffer. Hence it was 'better that Fijians should preserve what was best in their traditions, and that they should not too hurriedly aspire to a different plane, which, although unsuitable to themselves, might yet be suitable to the people of other races'. The commentary continued that the Fiji Government's first responsibility was to look after the Fijians while the first duty of the elected members was the care of their constituents. It was doubtful, the argument ran, whether Fijians could elect better representatives by direct voting than they obtained through the present system. Fijians should wait until electoral arrangements were completed for the Indians, then they might discover that what they presently sought was less advantageous than what they already enjoyed.

In the same file there are two other relevant minutes, one by D.R.Stewart, the Principal Assistant Colonial Secretary who had wide experience in Fijian matters, and the other by the Governor. Stewart
referred to the discussion of the franchise at the 1920 Council of Chiefs when his explanation had been accepted as satisfactory by the Chiefs who 'did not, however, at the time realize that the grant of a general franchise to Fijians might have a serious effect upon their own positions'. Rodwell minuted:

The time is approaching when we might give the Fijians a wider say in the elections of representatives in the Council. The voting unit might be the district council. I have no doubt that our experience in inaugurating the new electoral system for the Indians will be a useful guide in considering later on the question of advanced electoral institutions for the Fijians.

If the Governor wished to go by the experience of the Indians, then had he remained in Fiji after 1929 (he left by 1926) he would have been as disappointed as his successors. The franchise brought dissension within the Indian community and conflict with other groups. But his intention of introducing the secret ballot in the district councils came to nought. At the time these councils met monthly and were presided over by the buli; their other members were, turaga ni koros (official village headmen) of the districts, chiefs of tribes and anyone summoned by the buli, whether officials below him in the local native administration or ordinary village folk. The Provincial Councils held annually (though they could be called on special occasions) were presided over by the Secretary for Native Affairs; other members were the Roko, Bulis of each district, native magistrates, and medical practitioners, provincial scribe, a representative from each district selected by the district council, and no more than five chiefs nominated by the Provincial Commissioner or the Roko of the province. And representatives from these, chosen by officials, went with their Rokos and other government-chosen chiefs and officials to form the Council of Chiefs. None of these was chosen by direct election.

In fact the chiefs seemed themselves to show some democratic tendency as far as their own Council was concerned. In 1926 they resolved to reduce the size of the Council, as well as suggested that each provincial council itself select one of its representatives. 26

26 Proceedings, 1926. C.P.50/26. Resolution (relevant part) XXI. 'That the Council be composed of the Secretary for Native Affairs, the Rokos, Assistant Commissioners, and one representative from each Province selected by the Provincial Council (if the resolution regarding the re-constitution of Provincial Councils be approved) and such other persons as may be nominated by the Governor.' + Resolution XVIII of the 1926 Council requested that all
The Council that met in 1928 had 44 members instead of the 75 of previous years; it was more manageable and more representative without a wholly official composition: 13 official members, 12 nominated by the Governor and 19 selected by Provincial Councils.27 There was no wish to stop there for in 1933 the Chiefs resolved for future Councils:

(a) that two representatives from each province should be selected by the Provincial Council;
(b) that one Native Magistrate only and one Native Medical Practitioner only should be nominated by the Secretary for Native Affairs;
(c) that the maximum number of Chiefs to be appointed by the Governor should be reduced from 12 to 6;
(d) that selected and nominated members should hold office for four years. 28

As the Secretary for Native Affairs stated in his Report for 1933, part (a) of the resolution was particularly significant.29 Yet despite the willingness of the chiefs to be democratic, section (a) of their resolution was the only part that the Governor refused to sanction. 30

26 cont’d. persons entitled to attend the Provincial Councils should be permitted to vote, not merely those permitted by Native Regulation No.III of 1912, Section 7(1). The Governor agreed.

27 Hutson to C.O.369, 20 Dec. 1928; C.S.O. 3359/28. The Governor also claimed that the chiefs were quite satisfied with the new Council as it preserved its influence and status while at the same time giving it breadth of outlook and a voice to native opinion in the provinces.


29 C.P.17/34. The Provincial Council was perhaps the lynch-pin in the native administration. Besides those mentioned in the text above its annual meetings were attended by the Rokos and the Secretary for Native Affairs who presided. Again in the words of the Report (1937) of the Secretary for Native Affairs: "it dealt with ... finances, taxation, rates, annual estimates of revenue, and expenditure, the programme of work for the following year, education, health and lands. Resolutions passed by these councils are approved, or disallowed, by the Governor. These councils are a most important factor in the administration of native affairs and give a close contact between the natives and Government. Each Province is a separate unit, each with its own financial problems."

No explanation was provided. Nor were the hopes of Rodwell to introduce direct voting at district council level realized; neither he nor any of his successors took steps to experiment. Some thirty-three years after Rodwell's minute, when 11 out of 14 Provinces had sanctioned the secret ballot in their tikina councils, the Acting Secretary of Fijian Affairs claimed the procedure was not generally understood and expressed indignation with the Secretary of State in London for imposing it, accusing him of 'dictating a western political system to groups of people of whom few are yet ready to assimilate and I wish he would leave experienced administrators to conduct administrative affairs without extruding his undesirable influence over them'.

Such arrogance and paternalism in officials created a great hindrance to Fijian political development. The question that the British failed to answer was at what stage in his history was the Fijian going to be ready for democratic institutions - the professed ultimate goal of colonial rule. Of course, officials in Fiji in 1920 (and in 1953 no less), laboured under the delusion that time was at their disposal, and that training in democracy could be at leisure.

The Governor had already crushed any Fijian expectations for the franchise at the Council of Chiefs meeting of 1923:

The prospect of elective representation for the Indian community has given rise to various inquiries as to the prospect of a similar privilege being granted to the Fijians. The mere fact of the Indians receiving a communal franchise is not sufficient argument for according it to the Fijians, whose social system is entirely different, whose interests are protected by an administrative machinery more elaborate than any yet applied to the Indians, and to whom, through their Rokos, Chiefs and Councils, the Government is reader of access. When the time is ripe, and when it has been possible to judge by experience the success of the Indian franchise, I have no doubt that the Legislative Council and the Secretary of State will be prepared to consider the case of the Fijians, but in my opinion the moment has not yet arrived.

On his audience these words had a strange effect. While selecting the six from whom the Governor would choose two as their representatives the Chiefs stated:

This Council desires, however, to represent in a humble and loyal spirit that it considers that such membership is of

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31 Minute, Acting Secretary for Fijian Affairs, G.K.Roth, 30 July 1953; C.S.O. F9/69.
little use to the Fijians, and that this Council considers that there are other ways more conducive to the prosperity of us native Fijians. 33

Both the Governor's remarks and the Fijian response were unfortunate. Neither was conducive to a healthy political advancement of the Colony.

Government attitude appears particularly short-sighted when an examination of the Legislative Council debates reveals the birth of serious and increased Fijian participation there. And the new involvement accelerated with the years, obtaining greater force, direction, and positiveness following the appointment in November 1932 of Ratu J.L.V.Sukuna who quickly emerged there as the leading light both in the formulation and the expression of Fijian views. But in the twenties it was Pope Seniloli who was the first to decide that greater Fijian contribution was essential. His speeches were certainly not lengthy; they were extremely short by comparison with the others, but his brevity contained relevance and precision; the conciseness totally conveyed the Fijian viewpoint. 34 Nor was the Governor oblivious of this new vitality: 'I may say that the greater the part taken in debate by native members the better I am pleased, and I have noted with gratification an increasing readiness on the part of the native members to take part in discussions.' 35

After the Council of Chiefs' discussion had revealed the dissatisfaction there with the existing arrangements for native administration, Pope Seniloli and Joni Rabici brought their case to the Legislative Council in a motion which called for the appointment of a specially qualified officer at the headquarters to give his undivided attention to Fijian affairs. 36 Seniloli's motion was accepted and the Secretary for Native Affairs was re-appointed to concentrate fully on Fijian matters.

33 ibid.
34 For example, L.C.Debates 1921:183 (on Distribution of Native Rents Bill); L.C.Debates 1922:37 (British Peasant Settlement Scheme) and p.67 (Tailevu Dairy Scheme); L.C.Debates 1923:90 (Residential Tax Bill), this also displayed considerable firmness; on the same subject he stated 'the law provides for the Fijian boy to pay the tax from sixteen, and I think it should apply to every race.' (p.93.)
INITIATIVE in political matters appeared to be the prerogative of the chiefs. They were the voice of their people in all communication between the colonial regime and the Fijians. What needs explanation is the ready acceptance by the indigenous people of this system.

The presence of other races deterred disunity among Fijians. They had had experience of European settlers disrupting their way of life and seeking their land, their most valued possession until British rule had intervened. After Cession they had witnessed European clamour for land and labour, without consideration of Fijian sentiment. Again the presence of British rule had saved them. Recently Indians had twice gone on strike, while now they sought equality and political rights, all which seemed to portray a desire for control of Fiji. British rule and the chiefs were an effective barrier to Fijian subjugation by Indians. Hence the Fijian people found no incentive to join others. Besides they were themselves linked in various kinship ties, through marriage, through religion, through vasu (nephew uncle relationship), through their tribe or yavusa (descent from a common ancestor) and the mataqali (land-owning unit). Their chiefs were similarly related. And this solidarity was not to be breached for the sake of a widespread alliance with non-Fijians whose ways would destroy the fabric of their own society.37

Secondly Fijian political development was arrested after the extension of British hegemony.38 Hence to understand Fijian political behaviour, one needs to examine traditional Fijian political attitudes and relationships.39

37 Geddes 1948:103-117, discusses how various ties reinforced each other to create group solidarity. It is not intended to imply that Fijian society was a monolith. Indigenous Fijian life was characterized by cultural diversity, social and political conflicts between tribes, clans and kinsmen, but pax britannica made these futile and instead imposed conformity to the Bauan model.

38 Sukuna as Secretary for Fijian Affairs wrote in his Report of 1948 (C.P.27/49): 'With Cession native political development ceased. Fijians did not again come into active politics until the Constitution was revised in 1905; but it was politics of a very different kind.'

39 What follows is based on a memorandum on Native Politics by J.L. V. Sukuna in 1922 (C.S.O.221/22). Quotations and references are from this work unless otherwise stated. After Sukuna became Secretary for Fijian Affairs in 1945 some of his annual reports carried lively historical comments on Fijian society (e.g. C.P.27/49, C.P.5/52). Fijian political organization is also discussed in Roth 1937; Geddes 1948.
It is essential to recognize with Sukuna that 'Fijian society is patriarchal in type and is based not on contract and freedom but on consanguinity and status'. The power of the family head 'over his dependents and over the chattels of the family was practically unlimited and politically he might be regarded as the unit of government and legally as the proprietary unit'. In practice he was the trustee of the family. The heads of various families constituted a council whose command was law. Together they controlled every facet of life, planting, fishing, routine occupations, recreation, housebuilding, raids on other tribes, marriage and burial. All activity, social, economic and political was directed by the clan, and orders were issued through elders not to individuals but to family units. The head of the leading family was the chief of the clan and when clans formed tribes the patriarch of the first family in the most senior clan became the chieftain. Remembering there were variations, it might be stated generally that power was centred in the person of the chief, whose claims to the position were hereditary and by ceremonial recognition such as installation. The person of the chief was surrounded by taboos and respect from others. In these circumstances the individual believed that 'not only his services but his life belonged to the family and ultimately to the tribe of which he was a part; and so he devoted himself to the will and to the commands of the elders without so much as a thought for abstract rights'. Unquestioning submission resulted because 'each member of the social group had secured to him by the social structure the basis of his life-economy'. Since the 'law of the preservation of the tribe assured him also a definite share in the life and well-being of the group' the individual in his security was not inclined towards a life tending to 'self-regarding qualities in the community'. Such, according to Sukuna, was the situation before Cession, and this the British did not alter.

41 Geddes 1948:121. Rank in Fiji was always hereditary and bestowed according to three principles: consanguinity, order of birth, male sex. Roth 1937:132. In transmission of office succession was determined by seniority and election.
42 Roth 1937:163-164.
In the states that emerged, he continued, the good Fijian was the one 'who served his tribe without question, who gave obedience to authority, and who submitted to the will of his chief as the personification of the 'state'. ' This concept was adapted and adopted by the colonial rulers in the native regulations where certain communal obligations to chiefs were recognized. Thus 'all power, control and initiative' were vested in the chiefs particularly in those states like Rewa, Cakaudrove and Bau which had extended their might by conquest. The chief was the earthly embodiment of the state which in turn was an absolute power, in terms of its relationship with its subjects. Within this environment 'loyalty and respect for authority constituted the living forces in the organism of the 'state' in its more developed form, as the ties of blood had been in the early stages'. Further the individual was not a unit of society. From his own discourse, Sukuna concluded on the issue of equality:

All are agreed that this step, with certain restrictions against the excessive individualism of today and all that it implies, is the ultimate goal. But we cannot agree that that time has yet arrived ... the native mind is still as dependent, still as undeveloped, as his form of society indicates. Indeed a change so fundamental as the change of values and the substitution of a teleological end for one of blind service to the 'State' can only be achieved gradually through education and this step will be really only begun when the new teaching has first permeated the whole people. For these reasons it is to be regretted that an education system was not sooner started by the Government amongst the natives.

Not only did the colonial Government fail to educate Fijians politically, it terminated political growth. Politics was one aspect of life that the colonial regime wished to keep out of reach of its subjects, acute addiction to paternalism permitting it the rationalization that the subject race was not ready to tackle it. Indeed in the Fijian political system the Fijian people were subservient to the chiefs but the chiefs owed reciprocal obligations: protection and assistance in times of need. British rule made chiefs paid servants of the Crown and largely dependent upon it, and it buttressed their position. Colonialism superimposed its own autocracy (personified by the Governor) and authoritarianism (symbolized by the fiat of a hierarchy of alien officials) upon the traditional ones that it encountered. Fijians were henceforth to
obey two laws, their own enshrined in the native regulations and the general one, encompassing the whole Colony. Actually their position was worse, they were expected to adhere to certain rules from which the rest of the community was exempt. Stagnation, not development, resulted. Where they attempted to break out of their shackles the fetters gripped even more tenaciously; they were forbidden to discuss politics in their own councils; when for instance in Ba, they sought to discuss the current topic of Indian franchise at the behest of a European official, the Government in Suva retorted with condemnation. Initiative was stifled unless it emanated from the rulers and its favourites - the case of Apolosi Nawai, in the next section, will illustrate this type of action. Under these circumstances the Fijians generally possessed no other alternative but to accept chiefly rule and its dicta; and it was averse to their enfranchisement after 1923. To such a degree did the old order prevail that in 1939 Sir Harry Luke could still write that 'their outlook in matters of government is essentially monarchical and feudal'.

The Methodist and Catholic Missions reinforced the intentions of the colonial regime. While both had their differences periodically with the Government, these were not insurmountable, and British colonialism found Christianity an invaluable ally in its major aims. Both worked through the chiefs, both professed a desire to transform Fijian communalism to individualism. Neither had a definite plan as to how this would be achieved. Both favoured gradual change permitting time to take its course. The religious institutions which monopolized education had control over the development of the Fijian mind, and they too preached unswerving obedience and unquestioning

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France 1969:31. 'The methods adopted by missionaries called to the task of converting Fijians involved supporting the stratified system of privilege and authority and securing a position for the church in the highest stratum.'
loyalty to British rule and the Kingdom of God in Fiji. Both Catholicism and Methodism in their evangelizing crusade adopted the strategy of attempting to convert the chief initially, on the assumption that his retinue would follow. Despite their criticism of native administration and native regulations, and of individual chiefs, they had no intention of undermining the hierarchical structure of Fijian society or seeking the destruction of the traditional aristocracy, except where it suited their own ends.

That Fijians made no concerted attempt to reject these constraints owed a great deal to their economic condition. The debate on Fijian economic development centred around communalism versus individualism. At the various stages of British rule the policy makers stated that Fijians move away from their old ways towards individualism. Their real difficulty lay in being unable to deduce at what stage communalism should be phased out and how slowly individualism should be introduced. The dilemma may be best summed in the words of Governor Rodwell who had to solve this gargantuan problem.

Until the Fijian conceives an ambition to improve his status and environment, and to accumulate wealth for this purpose by means of agricultural and other industries, the development of individualistic tendencies is bound to be slow. It would be dangerous, even if it were practicable, to force such tendencies, by artificial means, although it may be possible to eliminate obstacles to the development of them.

In the process of instilling individualism, chiefly power, village structure, land tenure, would all have been affected. Radical change would have resulted and the most revolutionary of these would have been required in the thinking process and the value system of the Fijian people. The colonial regime appeared reluctant to resort to such drastic transformation. This is not to imply

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45 Amos to Small, 24 July 1915. M.M.P. Though the Queen Victoria School begun in 1907, was run not by any of the Churches the Government, in its selection of teachers ensured these would not undermine Christianity. In Fiji, as in other colonies, Christianity was accepted as an essential weapon in its 'civilising mission' by the European colonial power.


47 Rodwell to C.O.Conf. 27 June 1922.
that there was no change. In fact, the Fijian people themselves were willing to see modification as evidenced by the resolutions of their provincial councils, reports of officials in the districts, and the emergence of individual (galala) Fijian farmers operating independently (so far as possible) of the Fijian social structure, migration of labourers away from villages. Like their rulers the Fijians too were confronted with an extremely perplexing choice: how much of their culture must they sacrifice in order to come to terms with a western economic system; in order to obtain material prosperity what aspects of their ancestral ways must they abandon. No clear solution was available. They too were prepared to let time take its slow toll and adapt themselves to each situation, relinquishing custom where inevitable and imperative, or wedding tradition to economic exigencies when possible.

What is important is that even by the end of our period of study ninety per cent of the Fijians still lived in villages observing their tribal customs and pursuing subsistence agriculture. Thus they remained outside the cash economy of their country while the Indians were rapidly moving into it. Their education remained very rudimentary, those who obtained it were absorbed into the administration or into ecclesiastical duties as catechists or teachers and preachers; essentially they became men dedicated to the perpetuation of the status quo or to gradual modification. No entrepreneurs appeared, no dynamic middle class was in the making. The old order still held sway. And it was not conducive at this stage to political development towards democracy. Therefore there was no widespread clamour for reform, when clamour came it was


49 Once Ratu Sukuna assumed the role of prophet and saviour he prescribed the preservation of Fijian culture and planned economic development within the context of the existing social structure. But it must also be noted that until 1919 the Fijian population was on the decline and some even forecast the extinction of the race. Thus for almost two decades of this century the Fijian had to concern himself first and foremost with sheer survival.

50 Stockdale 1938:12.
rare and isolated. The examples, Apolosi Nawai and the Viti Cauravou deserve some examination.

APOLOSI NAWAI, a carpenter by trade, appeared suddenly upon the Fijian political stage late in 1913 when officials began reporting on activity to form a Fijian commercial company along co-operative lines. Early in 1914 the Viti Company, with five Europeans as directors was formed, but Apolosi's connection with it was short-lived. By February 1915 he had dissociated himself from the Viti Company although he continued to collect money with the intention of establishing a fully Fijian company, the Fiji Produce Agency as it came to be called. But that year he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for resisting the police. After being discharged in 1916 he set about attempting to fulfil his ambition until he was deported in November 1917 to Rotuma for seven years for sedition. He was freed in 1924 until 1930 when he was once more sent to Rotuma, for similar reasons; this time for ten years. In 1940 he was temporarily released but subsequently exiled to New Zealand as a precautionary measure during the War at the end of which he returned to Fiji and further imprisonment until his death in 1946 at the age of about 67 years.

Basically Apolosi's aim was to enable Fijians to enter commerce from which they were conspicuously absent and thus cut off from the profits that were available. His company intended to buy all Fijian produce (particularly bananas) for export, and import goods from abroad via a wholesale monopoly which would distribute its merchandise to Fijian retail shops. The whole effort was to be on a co-operative basis among Fijians with the design to eliminate Indian and European entrepreneurs who controlled all commerce and at whose mercy the Fijians found themselves.

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53 Secretariat of Fijian Affairs Papers. (Unnumbered in the National Archives of Fiji.)
and copra purchasers, and Indian and Chinese small shopkeepers, would have been severely affected. In outlook Apolosi’s plans displayed intense economic nationalism inspired by the total Fijian absence from the cash economy.

To achieve his goals Apolosi and his agents set about collecting funds from their countrymen. Judging from official and press reports and missionary accounts, the attempts proved an immediate success. But inadequate knowledge of financial practices and business organization, a lack of co-ordination without strict control from a central authority, quickly ushered in mismanagement, thence embezzlement, and finally the whole venture was discredited. A noble plan soon became a gigantic fraud. Initially there was widespread support for the scheme from Fijians generally as well as from some of the lesser officials such as bulis and scribes and from some Fijian missionary teachers, who, despite risks and threats of loss of office, contributed to Apolosi’s coffers and attended his meetings. The patronage of these groups was useful numerically, but no more; they did not possess the business acumen sorely needed to establish the company on a durable foundation and set it on the path of profit. Further, mass support for Apolosi frightened the establishment. The Fijian chiefs, the Christian missions, the European merchants and planters, all of whom found in Apolosi a menace to their social, economic or political standing, pressured the Government to stem the movement.

Apolosi’s extension of his propaganda into extra-commercial affairs worked to his disadvantage and contravened the laws of the colonial regime. In his attempts to arouse the Fijian people he prophesied the end of native taxes and chiefly rule, the expulsion of Europeans and Indians from Fiji and the overthrow of British rule. He advocated the control of chiefs by village councils and unity of Fijians in a single church. He forbade the payment of contributions


59 C.S.O. 3571/14, 3370/14.

to the church, and in some cases he even confiscated these for his own scheme. As a commoner he needed to justify his own claims and demonstrate their legitimacy beyond doubt and against challenge. Therefore he drew upon Fijian mythology and proclaimed his descent as being from the gods who had invested him with power to alleviate the lowly position of his compatriots. Political overtones coupled with financial corruption in his scheme, plus his denunciation by the Council of Chiefs in 1917, necessitated government intervention. Thus in 1917 the first phase of Apolosi Nawai's career ended with deportation to Rotuma.

During Apolosi's incarceration in Rotuma his disciples continued to maintain support for his ideas, especially the socio-religious aspects of them. But his influence declined quickly. On his return to Fiji, Apolosi, though he had not relinquished his economic ambitions, found that his former appeal had shrunk to a coterie that followed him on his travels and he was no longer welcome in every village. He concentrated more on his religious and political motives which with frequent sexual indiscretions, led to disruption and conflict with the authorities till his second deportation to Rotuma in 1930.

That Apolosi (in the 1913-1917 period especially) had considerable appeal was indicative of Fijian dissatisfaction with the status quo and a desire for improvement such as promised by him. Some of his most ardent followers had been former officials dismissed from the service and others who found the prevailing system stultifying. The establishment of British rule and the demands it generated, above all, the need to come to terms with a world wherein western economic values alone spelled material gain, spawned new needs within Fijian society. These remained largely unsatisfied because of the policy of preserving the traditional social structure without a definite programme to create and

63 Encl. Rodwell to C.O.Conf. 1 April 1923.
64 Report of Acting Secretary for Native Affairs on the Activities of Apolosi Nawai; C.S.O. C2/30.
accommodate changes essential for adjustment and development. With gradualism and stagnation as the chief characteristics of the British administration, an appeal for the utopia promised by Apolosi still existed as it had earlier for the Tuka and Luveniwai, although the appeal of these had not been as universal. Despite this attraction Apolosi failed, for two reasons. The forces ranged against him were too powerful for him. Second, he was unable to create a mass movement willing to follow him to the end against his enemies: the officials, missionaries and chiefs. The grip of communalism and the traditional hierarchy was too firm to be sufficiently loosened by a sudden onslaught.

Politically Apolosi's movement was purely disruptive. Beyond advocating the removal of the chiefs, he had offered no alternatives. He made no call for Fijian political representation either in the Municipal Council or Legislative Council or in the Council of Chiefs. Later, he sought to be made Tui Nadi after the death of the incumbent, as much for his own personal aggrandisement as perhaps for the political advancement of his people through his position. Because of the scandals, sexual and financial, surrounding Apolosi, his emergence as a leader had a detrimental rather than a beneficial effect for the Fijians. His misdemeanour enhanced the official and conservative view, that the Fijian was not yet ready to be freed from the political tutelage of his chiefs.

THE Viti Cauravou (Young Fijian Society) was in its objects considerably different from the movement unleashed by Apolosi Nawai. Yet both were motivated by the desire to improve the circumstances of the Fijians in their own land. In their origins there was one similarity. Viti Cauravou had originated in Davuilevu where Apolosi had been educated and there is no doubt that had he fulfilled certain requirements he could very well have become a member of this society.

66 Memorandum, J.L.V.Sukuna; C.S.O. 2286/17; Fell to C.O.Conf. 23 Dec. 1921.
The Viti Cauravou grew out of a society founded in 1922 by R.A. Derrick, Headmaster of the Methodist Mission Technical School at Davuilevu. His purpose was twofold: to enable old boys of his school to keep in touch with each other in adult life, and to extend membership to old boys and assistant teachers of the Queen Victoria School, thereby forming 'a mutual improvement and debating society'. As these former students returned home they formed branches in their various districts. Some of the better-educated and more perceptive Fijian commoners such as Mosese Buadromo (mentioned earlier) and Joeli Ravai (who had spent three years at Wanganui College, New Zealand, and some years later became the first commoner to be appointed a Fijian member in the Legislative Council) quickly seized on this initiative to implement their own ideals.

By 1923 the organization was open to all Fijian young men who possessed the necessary educational qualifications; produced evidence of good character; were members of some church, irrespective of sect; were engaged in useful work or occupation and operated a savings bank account. Obviously it was an attempt to teach by example and its President, Mosese Buadromo, stated:

> It is not the intention of the Young Fijian Society to be enemies of the Government or Church, or any other body, or to deceive our countrymen and reap benefit for ourselves only. We wish to co-operate with both Government and the Church so as to enable every man and this country to be improved which is also the esteemed desire of the Government.

The objects of the society were defined as: (1) to provide good fellowship among young Fijians; (2) to provide means of studying and discussing problems affecting Fijians and their development; (3) to provide facilities for improving the minds of members by discussions, lectures, etc.; (4) to provide occasions for members and their families to meet socially; (5) to engage in loyal exercises on such occasions as Empire and Cession Days; (6) to stimulate in an organized way efforts of members to undertake productive work, especially agriculture and to encourage the Fijian

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67 Seymour to C.O.216, 2 Aug.1933.
68 ibid.
69 Statement on Viti Cauravou supplied by its Council 1926 in C.S.O. C19/26. The following information on the aims of the Society are from the same source.
70 Buadromo to Col.Sec. 12 July 1926. ibid.
people to utilize their land and (7) to provide means whereby Fijians engaged in various branches of useful work may meet and talk together, and compare notes to discuss difficulties. It gave the undertaking:

It is expressly agreed that the society will not engage, as an organizer, in commercial enterprises; but on the other hand, it is expected that all members will engage in some useful work as Government servants, mission teachers or workers, or in some commercial or agricultural undertaking of their own.

No doubt such abnegation was a precautionary device after the commercial mismanagement of Apolosi Nawai.

Though after 1926 the annual conference of the society was addressed by the Secretary for Native Affairs, it did not meet with unanimous approval and encouragement. The Government made it clear that it ought not to become a political organization; politics was equated with sedition by the colonial regime in Fiji. 71 Politics in the colonial situation implied a change of the status quo in its various aspects and hence was anathema to the conservatism that guided the ruling caste in Fiji. Both European officials and chiefs were wary of the organization, particularly when it began to voice criticisms of the traditional social order. 72 A more liberal attitude was adopted by the Secretary for Native Affairs, Islay McOwan, who argued that while potentialities for both good and evil existed in the Viti Cauravou, opposition might antagonize the better elements who could guide it along proper channels. 73 Contrary to expectations the society did not wane and disappear, rather it engaged in some positive work such as employing Fijians as carpenters in the Nadi district to erect homes for its members. Through its efforts the society was able to persuade the Government to employ Fijians in the Agriculture Department in order to instruct them in preparing bananas for package for export. 75 And the Governor gave a piece of Crown land as a site for a proposed boarding house in Suva; where possible, candidates recommended by it

71 For instance, the Government granted recognition to the Indian Reform League on condition that its aims and objects remain social and philanthropical and not political. (Minute, Acting Colonial Secretary, 20 May 1926; C.S.O. C19/26.)
72 ibid.
73 Minute, 16 July 1926; ibid.
74 C.S.O. 900/28, 869/29.
75 C.S.O. C27/27.
were accepted into the Queen Victoria School. All, however, was not plain sailing as the following report from the District Commissioner, Savusavu indicates:

This society is active, and may or may not have high ideals. However, like many such schemes amongst a native people the 'tag-end' - of the population get the wrong ideas - or are allowed to. I understand that one of the principles of the society is that men with land and nuts, should cultivate and cut copra themselves instead of leaving their land and units to Chinamen or Indians whilst they go out to work. Planters assure me that many landless men whom they have tried to indenture refuse and say that the Viti Cauravou forbids it and in consequence labour already scarce, is becoming everyday more impossible to secure.

I am informed by some of the more educated members of the society that this is not the intention and there is no such prohibition on men indenturing who have no land. 77

Despite the misunderstanding between the ideals of leaders and the practices of their disciples the Society, undeterred, pressed for a better deal for the Fijians.

While its members collectively eschewed political involvement they did not refrain from comment on political issues of the day through resolutions passed at their annual conference and submitted for Government perusal and action. And its resolutions indicate incipient Fijian nationalism, though confined to an elite, numerically a minority, in the society. They were not chiefs, nor did they constitute the masses, but they were educated men and can correctly be described as able men possessing rational judgement; their opinion was educated opinion. It was an expression of those who understood their society, were in touch with it, and could be regarded as representative of their class. Though they commented on land and other matters such as the purity of the Fijian race,

76 ibid.

what is most relevant here is their stand on political representation. 78

The society was dissatisfied with the system of Fijian administration and sought to obtain some voice in its conduct. 79 It was requested in 1931 that the Government give the Fijian the right to elect directly their three representatives to the Legislative Council. 80 In reply the Government said that the nomination system was the one 'most in accord with the native social system and most likely to secure experienced and well-tried representation of the natives in the Legislative Council'. 81 Moreover, the Council of Chiefs was the most competent body to participate in this responsible task. Rebuffed here, the Viti Cauravou the following year requested that two members of their society should be regularly appointed to the Council of Chiefs. Again they received a negative answer; the Governor contended that the method of representation through the Provincial Council ensured that all sections of the Fijian community were granted adequate representation on that body.

78 In 1931 they resolved: 'Our hearts cry out at the great injustice that was done by the sale of our lands by our ancestors, for guns. Since the guns have been returned why do not the lands revert to us?' If it was no longer possible to return the lands to the rightful owners, then rents ought to be paid for them. C.S.O. CF 62/3. In 1930 they had been even stronger: 'that before Fiji is allowed to manage its own Church affairs all churches and the sites on which they stand, together with all mission lands be controlled by us Fijians and that the Mission have nothing whatever to do with it.' Further the society was against payment of compensation for improvements to land on the expiry of leases because it was exhausted and unfertile when it was returned. The society was especially concerned about the purity of the Fijian race asking for legislation because 'there is no law to protect from non-natives the mothers of our race'. Therefore it sought the restriction of Chinese and Indian migration into Fiji lest their influx led to the extinction of the Fijian race. (ibid). It stated that it had made a request in 1930 for legislation to forbid marriages between Fijian women and non-Fijians; it was undesirable to have a mixed race and to ensure this it would encourage Fijian women to join the society in order to educate them on the subject. 1932 Resolution, C.S.O. CF50/6; C.S.O. 771/29.

79 In 1931 it informed the Government that certain persons because of their past conduct ought not to be given official positions. In reply the Government said this referred to bulls, who were very carefully chosen and 'the present system has been productive of excellent results'. C.S.O. CF62/3.

80 C.S.O. CF62/3.

81 ibid.
Beyond noting requests of the Government there was not much that this society of educated Fijians could achieve. Its branches continued and it met annually in conference but was unable to obtain widespread support. Admittedly it was elitist and therefore restrictive in membership, but there is no indication that during the thirties it received overwhelming support from even the educated elements. One reason is that the leaders of this organization, which was 'the articulate expression of a vague groping of the Fijian younger generation towards a new social system', failed to comprehend that not all in their society shared their noble ideals and some merely joined for nebulous ideas of better times ahead which were not visible on the immediate horizon. Another reason was that the society could not contest the influence of the chiefs and the native administration which with government support had already a hold over the people. Since the Viti Cauravou appeared as a rival and was critical of the status quo in Fijian society it could not expect the blessing of the traditional elite which feared that it might supplant it and usurp its position. But most important was the inertia of mind that engulfed Fijian society. Sukuna, writing in 1917, had spoken of this characteristic, and ascribed it to a lengthy period of servility to autocratic rule of the chiefs. By the end of the nineteen thirties this malaise still persisted except in the tiny minority who participated in the Viti Cauravou.

Since the Viti Cauravou disagreed with the chiefs and the colonial regime on the pace of change within Fijian society it might have been expected that it would seek an entente with others, such as sections of the Indian community which were also dissatisfied with the Government. This was not to be. The society, like the chiefs and the Government completely upheld the principle of the paramountcy of Fijian interests and would seek an alliance with those

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82 Seymour to C.O.216, 2 Aug.1933.

83 C.S.O.2286/17.
Thus like the traditional leaders this organization of the emerging Fijian educated elite stood aloof from a community which by 1929 had been fifty years in Fiji and was rapidly transforming itself from being migrants into permanent citizens of the colony. Again this requires explanation.

When the two races met at the outset as labourers on the same plantations there was some conflict and the situation threatened to become worse. Early after the influx of Indians, Fijians began expressing the fear that the newcomers might deprive them of their land. And in 1888 at the Council of Chief's the Government was asked to explain the implications of the Indians' presence in Fiji for the future of the indigenous people. Though there was no rejoinder to Governor Thurston's reply the Fijian leaders could hardly have been fully satisfied by it. He at the time was uncertain whether any Indians would settle in Fiji and warned them not to shelter deserters or thieves and 'not to copy their distasteful customs'. It is important to note that there was no integration between the two communities; inter-marriages for instance were extremely rare and have remained so always.

The two races were distinct in very many ways and the factors that divided them became more marked and manifest with the passage of time and increased contact. The Indian was an individualist with his greatest loyalty to self in pursuit of material gain; he showed scant respect for anyone who put obstacles in his path. He was not reluctant to denounce authority when he found it irksome. For the

84 The attitude of the Viti Cauravou to constitutional change in the thirties is discussed in Chapter VIII pp.225-226; this has been done to preserve the chronological framework of the narrative as far as possible.

85 C.S.O. 2829/82, 2141/83, 1405/84, 1701/85, 236/87.
86 C.S.O. 2140/84, 2577/87.
87 Proceedings, 1888.
88 ibid.
89 C.S.O. 5079/98.
European he cared little and showed him sullen deference when forced by circumstances to do so. On the other hand, the Fijian was devoted to his communal social structure with obedience to his chiefs; his loyalty to authority was generally unquestioning. The chiefs and the Government of the Europeans were for his protection. Of the two, he preferred Europeans to Indians.

Mutual contempt characterized Fijian-Indian attitudes. The Indian, the Fijian knew, called him a jungali, literally a bushman, with the connotation of lacking civilization or breeding. For his part the Fijian found nothing admirable in the kai India. Physically he tended to be small and thin where the Fijian boasted a physique among the best in the world. Where the Fijian enjoyed life, was the owner of his land and master of his time, the Indian was a coolie slaving for someone else and subject to the whims of his employer, and engaged in a routine of drudgery. The lack of contact between the two races meant that prejudices hardened with time and there was no opportunity for the understanding of each other's aspirations.

Sometimes when contact occurred it increased distrust. For instance, during the 1920 strike Fijian constables were used to maintain peace. But in the 1921 cane strike some Fijians initially showed sympathy and in Nadroga, temporarily provided succour for Indian labourers until a combination of official pressure, missionary persuasion and self-interest made this new-found union short-lived. When in the nineteen twenties and thirties Indians agitated for political rights and against the Residential Tax and made demands for more land and better educational facilities, Fijians found themselves unable to join them. The relationship of Fijian landlord and Indian tenant that emerged early and endured thereafter also kept the two races apart. Frequently the Fijian was reluctant to part with his land and frequently he had to be enticed by gifts, and always over the head of the Indian hung the

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90 C.S.O. 150/34.

91 The phrase means 'India person', a derogatory term depending on the tone of voice.
uncertainty of tenure and therefore livelihood. To have continually
to humour the landlord did not increase the tenants' love for him,
he had to be tolerated and placated and this relationship did not
make for total friendship.

For its part the Government pursued no policy to achieve
integration or even to bring the two numerically major components
of the population into a close working relationship. In the
compartamentalized world of colonialism social intercourse between
ethnic groups was discouraged. The separate administration for
governing the Fijians ensured divergent paths for the two
communities. Fijians took their problems and grievances to a
separate institution for redress. And they wished this
arrangement to continue unhampered. Besides, it was the European
whom the Fijians were taught to look up to, not the Indians.
Their rulers were Europeans, their missionary benefactors and
educators were Europeans. European skill, expertise and commerce
(whether the C.S.R.Company or Morris Hedstrom or Burns Philp)
sustained their country. They received no tangible nourishment,
spiritual or material from the Indians.

Thus they existed side by side in the same country, aware of
each other's existence, reacting to each other's ambitions,
generally at peace and without open discord, frequently apathetic
and usually tolerant. These do not characterize good relations
though they ostensibly illustrate harmony. They do not make for
a political alliance, rather for separate, without equal, political
development. So it was between Indians and Fijians. While the
former was impatient for more political power the latter remained
satisfied with the status quo and government control.

What the Fijians wanted was protection from threats to their way
of life. In fact, this was the reason that had induced them to
cede their autonomy to the British Crown in 1874. To it they had
remained loyal and it had not betrayed them. They saw no reason
for wishing the abrogation of an agreement which worked to their
political advantage. Tried friends had proved good guardians and
they ought not to be offended or deserted for those likely to
menace Fijian political primacy in Fiji. Fijians felt entitled to
Fijian paramountcy as their birthright and British rule was
providing this guarantee.

And in their stand the Fijians were united in opposition to Indian demands. Thus Fijian and Indian political paths diverged. But with the arrival of the franchise the Indians lost the unity that the Fijians continued to display.
MUSLIM SEPARATISM

DURING the nineteenth century Hindus and Muslims lived alongside one another in the various plantations to which they were assigned as indentured labourers or in the various districts where they settled after the expiry of their contract. Most of them observed their rituals and taboos without one attempting to offend the other. Plantation communities were smaller than in the average village in India and people living under uniform conditions were in frequent contact; this made for mutual tolerance. Besides, the common enemies were the indenture system, the employers, and the sirdars, and the sense of solidarity so embodied discouraged unnecessary internal squabbles, the brotherhood fostered by the rigours of plantation life deterred futile religious bickering. When intolerance and strife appeared they did not originate in the plantations of indentured labourers rather among those who had served their contract. They were the luxury of the free.

The first signs of Hindu-Muslim bitterness in Fiji surfaced at the turn of the century and involved Hindu indignation at cow slaughter. The Hindu held the cow sacred; she was the mother whose milk provided nourishment and sustenance, to kill the animal was no less than matricide. By killing it and partaking of its flesh one became a namak haram, an ingrate who having eaten at a man's table then turned and treacherously murdered the host. To the Hindu cow-killing was heinous at any time, but to have to see it or know of its occurrence in close proximity of his own dwelling was unbearable. He was always aware of the Muslim as a beef-eater, but preferred not to see signs of it, nor to be told of it. In the days of amity, Hindus and Muslims often sang hymns together, and Hindus even helped Muslims to build mosques. Those killing a cow or a pig when caught were ostracized and punished. 1

1 Sharma 1937:35-36, says such a person was beaten up and boycotted socially. Through the C.S.R.Company's and its sirdars' co-operation the individual was given extra work. Before he was re-instated by society the panchayat required him to give a feast in which both Hindus and Muslims participated.
Until the end of the second decade of the twentieth century Hindus and Muslims, despite the divergent and often opposed traits of their cultures, existed without collision or public recrimination at each other's beliefs. In the nineteen twenties and thirties the tranquillity was shattered. Yet the differences did not end in violence or civil strife as in India. In Fiji the weapons were social boycott and newspaper wars; the battles were fought with words, emotional and abusive, instead of blows, injurious and fatal. Nonetheless, Hindu-Muslim differences in Fiji were influenced and intensified by the trends in similar communal relations in India at the time.

In essence these outbursts of communal feeling in Fiji were part of the new confidence of the new Indian society that was growing there. The impetus for the religious revival came with militant leaders from India, especially those espousing Arya Samaj principles. The Arya Samaj movement had existed in Fiji as early as 1904 but it had remained dormant until the arrival from India, in the nineteen twenties of an Arya Samaji missionary, Sri Krishna, who brought with him communal antipathies currently afflicting India. His proletizing zeal made conflict inevitable. Besides, the Arya Samaj movement by its nature was dedicated to reforming and purging Hinduism of alien influence and reconverting those Indians who had left its fold.

Sri Krishna preached that all Muslims and Christians were against progress, hence Hindus ought to have no contact with them whatsoever. He advocated suddhi or ceremonial reconversion - the cause of much Hindu-Muslim trouble in India. He urged the boycott of European goods and mission schools. Girls ought not to be taught English as this led to the acquisition of English ways which were contrary to Hindu custom; he even condemned the use of knives and forks for eating. Hindus were advised against indulging in tobacco and alcohol. Under his aegis the Hindu Maha Sabha was set-up in Fiji for the purpose of uniting all Hindus. An immediate repercussion of Sri Krishna's preaching was Hindu anger with Muslims in Fiji when the Arya Samaj leader Swami Shradanand was murdered in Delhi in 1926 by a Muslim. Later arrivals like

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3 C.S.O. C6/27, C15/27.
Kundan Singh Kush and K.B. Singh continued the work of Sri Krishna. But it is too simplistic to blame Hindu-Muslim conflict in Fiji solely on men from abroad. Had those emerging as local leaders repudiated them peace might have prevailed. Instead they supported the newcomers. Men such as Badri Mahraj, his son Raghvanand, others like J.P. Mahraj, Parmeshwar, all joined forces in search of eminence in their community. They capitalized on opportunities for agitation such as those provided by the request of a Muslim, Inayat, to open a butchery in 1926. Hindu-Muslim differences were also exploited by members of the emerging educated class, such as Vishnu Deo, Raghvanand, Parmeshwar and Chattur Singh, to obtain positions of leadership in the Indian community. Such status could bring material gain and later, with the advent of political franchise, election to the Legislative Council.

Of the indentured labourers emigrating to Fiji from Calcutta during 1879 to 1916 Muslims had formed 14.6% and their proportion in the Indian population did not vary greatly thereafter. In 1908 it was estimated that there were about 4,000 Muslims, mainly from the United Provinces, Bengal and Punjab, of whom about a third were under indenture on plantations. On completion of their contract they usually leased land mainly for cultivating sugar cane and bananas. A number had trading licences or stores, while a few were employed as domestic servants or in some minor capacity in the Government. At this stage they had only one mullah (priest), Nasrullah Shah, who resided at Ba and occasionally visited Suva and other districts. In 1908 they had three or four schools, and three buildings in country districts for worship; in Suva where there were only 70 Muslims there was neither mosque nor school. According to an official assessment the position of Muslims was fairly prosperous and there was no lack of employment. They were no less law-abiding than others, and the younger ones were eager to avail themselves of opportunities for self-advancement. Thus they were no different in their goals and aspirations from the rest of the Indian society already described.

5 C.S.O. 3471/08.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGIONS OF INDIANS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
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<td>Muslims</td>
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<td>Sikhs</td>
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<td>Christians</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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(+ Not known in which category Sikhs were put.)

Source: Census Reports 1911, 1921, 1936.

Nonetheless from the outset the Muslims had preserved their own rituals and feasts and retained their separate religious identity. With the annual increase in the number of ex-indentured Muslims there grew among them the need to establish their religion on a firmer foundation in Fiji. They were a minority and their sense of solidarity amidst a Hindu majority advised such action, especially when the latter began showing signs of a new religious consciousness. Muslims began collecting funds, searching for land to build mosques, and forming associations to achieve their goals.

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6 Thomas Orr McMillan, My Story. McMillan was born in Scotland in 1867 and arrived in Fiji in 1893 as a chemist at the C.S.R. Company's Rarawai mill, Ba. A photocopy of his manuscript exists in the Alport Barker Library in Suva. It contains no dates, no page numbers. A report in the Fiji Times, 1 Oct.1887, says that Indians in Rewa were enjoying a three-day holiday to celebrate Moharram, the occasion when the Tazia procession took place. The same report states that Indians around Suva mistook the date of these celebrations, having anticipated them through want of information and the observance was being held, apparently again, on the orthodox days. The inference is that a specifically Muslim feast was being celebrated by Hindus as well.

7 See Gillion 1962:146ff. for religious affairs in Fiji in the indenture period.

The birth and continuance of these organizations polarized groups, both within Muslim society and among Indians as a whole. With the appearance of these blocs Muslims began to establish direct contact with the Government for recognition of their religious practices. And officials, though generally neutral in religious matters were not unwilling to help, as an inspector of immigrants wrote from Navua:

I have personally taken some interest in the Mohammedans here, as they endeavour to do something for the religious instruction of their people, and this is much needed.

As a distinct Muslim identity began to appear differences occurred between Hindus and Muslims when the less tolerant and sensitive elements on both sides insisted on practices repugnant to adherents of the other creed. But these occurrences were rare and not

9 In 1915 according to what C.F. Andrews told Booth, the Agent-General of Immigration, there were three factions among Muslims in the Suva-Rewa area. One was led by Mirza Mulla Khan (who according to Gillion 1962:149, had arrived in Fiji in 1898), with their headquarters at Nausori; these were strictly orthodox and educated and a minority. The second faction was led by Nasrullah Shah of Suva; these were wealthy and liberal. The second group was known as the 'Indian Reconciliation Society' and was willing to unite with Mirza Khan's supporters who called themselves 'Separatists' and did not desire unity. The third comprised those who refused to identify themselves with either of the other two. C.S.O. 10364/15.

10 The Anjuman Hidayat-ul-Islam informed the Government that their marriage ceremonies had to be performed by a kazi or a Muslim priest. And only those who had been recommended by the Anjuman and registered with government should be permitted to solemnize Muslim marriages. The kazi should be entitled to some fixed fee as was customary in India. (C.S.O. 10364/15). The Society of Ishar Ithul Islam wrote to the C.S.R. Company for land in order to build a mosque which would be used as a school. (C.S.O. 8942/16.) The Company obliged by granting a site plus £50. (C.S.O. 1063/17). The Anjuman Ishaq El Islam sought land from the Government for Qurbani (i.e. slaughtering animals according to Muslim rites.) C.S.O. 994/18.

11 C.S.O. 9323/11.

12 Labasa in 1908 was an example. Certain Muslims insisted that the Koran required that they sacrifice cattle for their Bakr-Id festival. Some Hindu Brahmins during the Ram Lila refused to permit Muslim participation as in the previous year. In 1903 at Bulileka, near Labasa, a Muslim had his hands and feet mutilated because of insult to some Hindu ceremonies. C.S.O. 5544/08, 5579/08, 6139/08.
widespread.13

In 1926 a group of Suva Muslims founded the Fiji Muslim League influenced in this direction by a reaction to the resurgence of Hinduism in Fiji under Sri Krishna and his Arya Samaj supporters. Previous to 1926 there had been Muslim organizations in the various districts and the Fiji Muslim League was to be a central body designed to represent the views of these smaller and less effective associations.14 The objects of the Fiji Muslim League were given as:

(a) To disseminate the morals, ideals and teaching of Islam.
(b) To unite the Muslims, and promote social intercourse between them.
(c) To render religious and secular service to the Muslims.
(d) To promote and arrange for the learning of Islamic literature by Muslim children.
(e) To endeavour to eradicate the use of intoxicants and narcotics such as alcohol, opium, charas and other obnoxious drugs by the Muslims.
(f) To bring about a close tie and better understanding between the Government and its subjects.

Among the rules it was emphasized that 'discussions in rebuke to other religions or of a political nature will not be allowed at any meeting of the League'. Initially the League was not political. Also it appeared willing to co-operate with the Government; it made requests for help rather than condemn the latter for Muslim grievances. This strategy paid dividends when it became embroiled with the Arya Samajis.15 Among its major objectives was the provision of religious education for Muslim youth; there was a call for instruction in Urdu and teachers were supplied, for instance,

13 Brewster 1922:299-300, states that no friction existed between Hindus and Muslims and when the latter celebrated the Mohurram, 'Hindu sword-players and jugglers used to dance and take a place in the procession of the rival persuasion.'
14 C.S.O. 4791/26.
15 Under its aegis a Moslem Women's League was formed and it requested that Government provide a woman doctor in Toorak (Suva) qualified to treat maternity cases as Indian women abhorred treatment by males. The Executive Council advised the Governor to inform the League that an annual subsidy for such a doctor would be given if a motion were introduced in the Legislative Council and provided the appointee attended paupers gratuitously. C.S.O. 5190/28.
to the Methodist School in Toorak and the Sangam School in Nadi.¹⁶

Until the Indian communal election of 1929 Hindu-Muslim relations continued in a low key without major outbursts. With the defeat of the Muslim, Khalil Sahim, in the Eastern constituency, the situation deteriorated. Muslims had been under the impression that they might be permitted through Hindu magnanimity to win one of the three Indian seats. In the prevailing atmosphere of strained relations their disappointment was galling. They thought their position precarious.

In the 1930's Hindu-Muslim antagonism reached a new peak and subsided only towards the end of the decade. Both sides circulated scurrilous literature about their opponents' faith and founders.¹⁷ Muslims complained of a pamphlet called Rangeela Rasul which dwelt on the alleged iniquities of their prophet. The Arya Samaj distributed material highlighting the less pleasant features of Muslim rule in India, and there was another called Shuddhi Samachar which had pictures of maulvis having their beards and hair shaved and performing the hauan or ceremony for their conversion to Hinduism.¹⁸ Muslim propaganda literature emphasized the miseries of the Hindu caste system, alleged instances of beef eating among ancient Hindus, and criticised Swami Dayanand Saraswati's personal life and teachings.¹⁹ Abuse and counterabuse followed in the press, initially in the Fiji Samachar and then in Dr.Beattie's Vriddhi-Vani and from 1935 the Message of Islam.²⁰

In the Hindu community there was also division between Sanatanis (orthodox) and the Arya Samajis. Its only political implication was the conviction of Vishnu Deo and his disqualification from being a candidate in the Legislative Council election of 1932.²¹

¹⁷ To avert trouble the Post Office confiscated most of this material before it could reach its destination.
¹⁸ C.S.O. 167/29.
¹⁹ C.S.O. 2226/20.
²⁰ Vriddhi-Vani was particularly critical of the Arya Samajis. (C.S.O. 1837/30); but it also incurred the wrath of the Message of Islam.
²¹ Vishnu Deo circulated extracts from the Hindu Purana aimed at embarrassing the Sanatanis, but the Supreme Court judged the excerpts pornographic.
It was not as significant as the conflict with the Muslims. The Muslims found themselves harassed and outmanoeuvred by the better organized Arya Samajis who were led by V. Deo, K. B. Singh, Kundan Singh Kush in the Suva-Rewa area and Chattur Singh and Sahodar Singh in the western district. Hindus were organized at village levels into Sangathans (religious unions) with the Hindu Maha Sabha as the co-ordinating body. The Sangathans aimed at converting Muslims by economic pressure and boycott. Hindu midwives either refused or demanded exorbitant fees before attending Muslim women. Muslims in Viria had a torrid time as they were forced to conform to Hindu rites and ceremonies. A Hindu woman was fined £1 for having received water from a Muslim; social contact with Muslims meant ostracism for Hindus from their co-religionists. Some Hindu youths in cars and motor lorries when passing Muslim homes slowed down and sang insulting songs, citing instances of Muslim conversion to Hinduism. The Sangathan in Rewa resolved to assault a Muslim whose father-in-law had sold cattle to a European butcher. A prominent Hindu offered £200 to those willing to participate. But the Muslim was saved by other Hindus. There were Hindus, largely Sanatanis, who deprecated Arya Samaji behaviour. Some Hindus in the Rewa district refused to work under Muslim sirdars during cane-cutting. Muslims, at first helpless, retaliated by keeping contact with Hindus to the unavoidable minimum and refrained from attending Hindu ceremonies and feasts.

The arrival in 1933 of a Muslim missionary, Mirza Muzzaffar Beg, aggravated the strife. Unlike his Muslim counterparts in Fiji, he was well-educated and fully conversant with Hindu and Christian scriptures besides his own. He was prepared to engage in public

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22 C.S.O. 531/30.
23 In Rakiraki, for instance in 1935, members of the South India Sanmarka Ikia Sabha sent a memorial to the Government in which they accused Arya Samaj Sangathans in their area of stirring trouble. The South Indians dissociated themselves from these Hindus saying they regarded all Indians as one and had no wish to cause mischief. C.S.O. F51/5/23.
24 C.S.O. 1774/30.
25 Muzzaffar Beg's entry into Fiji also split the Muslim community into Sunnis (orthodox) and Ahmadiyyas (the followers of one Mirza Gulab Ahmed, and regarded by Sunnis as heretics). Strife between the two sects thereafter became an enduring feature. Because of space, and its irrelevance to this study, it is not intended to discuss this aspect of Muslim history in this thesis.
debate with members of the opposing religions but the Government, fully aware of the dangerous repercussion of this practice, discouraged it. Besides, the Arya Samajis, appreciating Beg's powers, found it best to avoid him. Much of the battle was confined to the press. Beg was a relentless agitator, bent as much on displaying his own knowledge as on propagating Islam, and in 1937 the Government refused his request to remain in Fiji. Beg certainly stirred the Ahmadiyyas, but the Sunnis at the beginning of the thirties found their champions in the Hasan brothers, two English-educated Punjabi barristers. Like Beg they were fanatics and desired Muslim separatism. If the Arya Samajis were the instigators of a rift in the Indian community, these Muslims did nothing to mend the breach, they sought its perpetuation and entrenchment.

The rancorous climate in which the Muslims found themselves led them to demand separate political representation. The immediate cause for Muslim action was the failure of Muslims to obtain a seat in the Legislative Council in 1929. In pursuit of Muslim political rights the Fiji Muslim League emerged as the leader and spokesman.

Muslims from Suva, Rewa and Navua gathered at the Jame Mosque in Toorak on 29 September 1929 to discuss the question. It was alleged that Hindus had voted en bloc by 'herd instinct', having become tools of the Arya Samaj, therefore:

This mass meeting of the Muslims deeply regrets the attitude of certain sections of the Indian community who made a religious issue of the recent Indian Elections, thereby succeeding on the strength of their numerical preponderance in returning their candidates to Indian seats in the Legislative Council; and further this mass meeting expresses its deep sense of loyalty

The following resolution passed at the meeting of the Muslim League on 23 Dec. 1928 underlines their anxiety:

'That this annual general meeting feels alarmed at the anti-Islamic propaganda which is being assiduously fostered up all over the Colony by a certain section of the Indian community and respectfully appeals to the Government to take every precaution in safeguarding the Muslim minority community when political privileges are extended to Indians.' Fiji Samachar 17 May 1930.

26 C.S.O. F51/9.
27 Even before the franchise was granted to Indians Muslims were apprehensive of what might become of their political position. The following resolution passed at the meeting of the Muslim League on 23 Dec. 1928 underlines their anxiety:

'Vealth this annual general meeting feels alarmed at the anti-Islamic propaganda which is being assiduously fostered up all over the Colony by a certain section of the Indian community and respectfully appeals to the Government to take every precaution in safeguarding the Muslim minority community when political privileges are extended to Indians.' Fiji Samachar 17 May 1930.

28 Fiji Muslim League to the Col. Sec. 18 Oct. 1929; C.S.O. CP5/2.
to the British Government and dissociates itself from any extreme unconstitutional measures which may be pursued for the attainment of Indian aspirations. 29

Communal strife and the boycott of the Legislative Council after the defeat of a common roll resolution in October 1929 left the Government distressed and angered by the behaviour of the Indian community, especially the small but dynamic Arya Samaj element which was in the vanguard of all political initiative and agitation. On 27 December, after a conference between the Governor and seven Indian leaders who pressed for common roll, the Muslim delegate Abdul Karim refused to sign a letter from these leaders reiterating their demands. From a Muslim official who was clerk to the Chief Police Magistrate, Government received a minute on the Muslim viewpoint. He stated that Hindu-Muslim hatred was strong in Fiji, especially in the Rewa where the Hindu majority was boycotting Muslims socially and commercially, resulting in the near ruin of Muslim barbers and petty traders. Under common roll Hindu domination would result. Hindus wished to use others to destroy Europeans first, then Indian Christians and finally Muslims. If the Government wished to grant common roll, it must reserve seats for Europeans, Muslims and Christians. Or else, three Indian seats ought to be allocated one each to Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Unless the Government chose one of the above alternatives, he concluded, it would be unwise for Muslims to oppose Hindus for in the end the latter would take revenge. Having had enough harassment from the Indian community, and the Government of India too at times, and being aware of communal electorates in India, the Fiji Government seemed willing to capitalize on the divisions in the Indian community in order to silence and outwit the Arya Samajis in their campaign for non-cooperation and common franchise. Arya Samaji tactics and Muslim fears provided it with assistance and justification for its policy.

On 11, 12 and 13 December, 1929, storms and floods struck Labasa, Sigatoka, Navua and Rewa and brought havoc. Leaders of the Fiji

29 Resolution, 29 Sept. 1929, to Col.Sec. 18 Oct. 1929; C.S.O. CP5/2. Muslims thereafter desisted from participation in the meetings of the Arya Samaj dominated Indian National Congress.
30 Minute, Gafoor Sahu, 28 Dec. 1929; C.S.O. CP5/2.
31 Sahu stated that in an Indian population of 65,000, there were 9,000 Muslims and 2,000 Christians.
Indian National Congress used the disaster to condemn the Government for neglect and themselves collected and distributed provisions. But charges that help was provided only to political friends and religious followers led Muslims and Christians to demand a meeting; the President refused and these two sections resigned, leaving the Congress in Hindu hands under the control of the Gujerati lawyer, S.B. Patel.

A mass meeting of Muslims, called at Nausori on 5 Jan. 1930, unanimously elected a Provisional Committee for the Attainment of Muslim Political Rights which was authorized to assert by all constitutional means the Muslim claim to direct representation in the Legislative Council. A petition was prepared and sent to the Governor on 8 January 1930 drawing his attention to the situation of the Muslims and requesting the creation of a constituency for all Muslims in Fiji so that they might have one representative in the Legislative Council until the number of seats were increased when they too would receive a proportionate increase; in case of common roll the Governor should guarantee that seats would be reserved for them and other minorities; they wished their memorial to be sent to the Secretary of State. They gave the several reasons why they sought this remedy. First, they were a numerically small community which had shown its great importance in the Colony by devotion to British rule and continuous co-operation with the C.S.R. Company. Second, Hindus greatly outnumbered them and they could not hope to elect a Muslim. Third, Hindus, being anti-Muslim and inspired by events in India, had organized commercial, industrial, and social boycott of Muslims hoping to convert them to Hinduism by economic pressures. Fourth, Muslims were sparsely scattered in districts with a concentration of Hindu population and sought to educate their children in the Urdu script which was opposed by the majority. Fifth, the common roll agitation conducted by Arya Samajis and other Hindus was not supported by Muslims except a few who could not do

32 The meeting resolved: 'This mass meeting of Muslims unanimously declares that the anti-Islamic attitude of the Hindoos has made it impossible for the Muslims to any longer co-operate with the Hindoos in their demand for 'Common Electoral Roll' unless special provisions are made for the safeguarding of the interests of the Muslims and other minority communities.'
otherwise and showed ostensible solidarity with Hindus; even some of these had now parted company. Sixth, Muslims repudiated obstructionist attitudes and favoured co-operation with the Government for the welfare of Fiji. And, common roll meant Hindu domination of others including Fijians; Muslims and other minorities could expect no justice from it. In March 1930, M.T.Khan of Lautoka, who had favoured common roll and was the Secretary of the Anjuman Ishait El Islam, wrote to the Muslim League that he and his organization no longer sided with Arya Samaji elements like Parmanand and Chattur Singh who were advocating that they send both a deputation to India to press for common franchise and volunteers to fight for swaraj there. Instead M.T.Khan now favoured separate representation.

From other Indians Muslims received no aid for their scheme. The Hindu Maha Sabha repeated its demand for a common franchise for all British subjects and protested against communal or separate representation. At a meeting in Lautoka Indian leaders like S.B.Patel and A.D.Patel regretted that Muslims had fallen prey to divide and rule tactics. The Fiji Samachar, the Arya Samaj mouthpiece, deprecated the Muslim demand and countered by repeated requests for common franchise.

The Governor did nothing to discourage the Muslims, his response to the Fiji Muslim League on receiving its resolution of 29 September 1929 was:

His Excellency the Governor is confident that he will find in the Muslims of Fiji the same measure of loyal support as is accorded to the Government by Muslims in other parts of the Empire, and he will be glad of the assistance and advice of the League in all matters affecting the welfare of their community.

33 C.S.O. 1837/30.
35 In this period practically every issue of this bilingual paper deals with Indian politics and in 1930 several issues discuss Hindu-Muslim relations, see for instance copies of 22 Mar., 17 May, 24 May, 31 May, 6 July 1930.
36 Col. Sec. to Fiji Muslim League, 18 Jan. 1930; C.S.O. 289/30.
His adviser on Indian affairs was equally sympathetic to the Muslims and favoured a separate seat for them.\(^{37}\)

Sir Murchison Fletcher, in his despatch to the Secretary of State, Lord Passfield, enclosed the Muslim petition of 8 Jan. 1930 and stated that much could be said in favour of the Muslim demand. In a Crown Colony where the Government always had an official majority it was useful to have the advice of each important segment of the community.\(^{38}\) Besides, Muslims who were 'more loyal and more law-abiding' had good grounds to fear that their needs would receive scant consideration at the hands of Hindu members.\(^{39}\) Therefore, at the next dissolution of the Legislative Council the Muslim request should receive favourable consideration. The Secretary of State enquired whether Fletcher had in mind an extra seat for the Indian community - he had not.\(^{40}\) Lord Passfield was told by Islay McOwan, deputising for Fletcher, that two distinct electorates were envisaged, one for a Muslim representative and another for two Hindus.\(^{41}\) As instructed by Fletcher, McOwan stressed that there was real animosity between the two communities.\(^{42}\) In his reply Passfield was against immediate action though he gave the Governor liberty to suggest that favourable consideration could be given at the next dissolution.

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\(^{37}\) The Secretary of Indian Affairs told the Col.Sec. 21 Jan, 1930: 'Socially and economically progressive but numerically small and hardly more than 12% of the total Indian population, the scattered Muslim community cannot hope to return a representative under a common Indian franchise. High questions of political equality tend to fade into obscurity in the light of a request that the despised communal franchise should be made yet more communal.' C.S.O. 289/30. Encl. Fletcher to C.O.Conf. 3 Feb. 1930.

\(^{38}\) A year later, Fletcher minuted: 'As long as the Government retains its majority, the Council is in effect an advisory body, and I would prefer to have the advice of both Hindus and Muslims, whereas under the present conditions it is probable that only Hindus would be returned.' Minute, 18 Mar. 1931; C.S.O. 289/30.

\(^{39}\) Fletcher to C.O.Conf. 3 Feb. 1930.

\(^{40}\) C.O. to Fletcher Conf. 2 May 1930.

\(^{41}\) O.A.G. to C.O.Conf. 3 July 1930.

\(^{42}\) In June a Muslim deputation to the Governor had complained of Hindu interference with certain Muslim festivals and Fletcher wanted the prevalence of this antagonism conveyed to London. Minute, Fletcher, 12 June 1930; C.S.O. 289/30.
dissolution. Fletcher, however, gave no such intimation to the Muslims immediately. Before he could, the Government of India intervened requesting postponement of any decision until they had made their submission on the subject.  

Meanwhile, in Fiji, official opinion contended that Hindu-Muslim relations were deteriorating and steps towards a solution were necessary. Fletcher regretted that the poor intelligence system of the Government meant that they were unable to fathom occurrences at village level. The setting up of a panchayat was considered and dropped, and early in 1932 the Governor informed the Legislative Council of the appointment of the first Indian Advisory Committee, in Rewa, the hotbed of communal strife. The Executive Council in 1931 made three recommendations on separate occasions on the communal situation. In May it approved a proposal to grant Muslims separate representation and called for the preparation of a definite scheme for separate constituencies. Next it advised that the Government take no action in the Hindu-Muslim friction. Thirdly, it decided that the Secretary of State should consent to the creation of two electorates, one for Muslims with one seat, another with two seats for non-Muslims. For the second, a system of voting incorporating some form of plumping should be introduced so as to improve the prospects of minorities of returning a candidate at the polls. The advice was despatched to Whitehall. Nothing was done as a reply from India was still awaited. Before this came the Indian election was held,

43 C.O. to Fletcher Conf. 30 Jan. 1931.
45 Minutes Ex.Co. 6 May 1931.
47 Minutes Ex.Co. 2 Sept. 1931.
48 Fletcher to C.O. Conf. 24 Sept. 1931. The Governor also sent statistics of Indian voters and population (1921 Census) according to religion. There were 52,906 Hindus and 1,165 of these were registered as electors; from 6,435 Muslims there were 708, and only 57 from 708 Christians.
and members were returned for two constituencies - no candidate could be found for the third. The Muslim League informed the Governor that they had taken no part in the election and as the new members did not represent them they would accept no responsibility for their actions. In case of further delay in granting Muslims a separate franchise they wanted the Governor to nominate a Muslim in the meantime.

Once again the Governor was unable to make the final decision for on 2 September 1932 he received the reply of the Indian Government with which the Secretary of State was in agreement. As long as Indians had only three seats, argued India, one of these could not be allocated to Muslims either on the basis of their population or their voting strength. Secondly, the reservation of a seat for Muslims on the basis of a separate communal franchise would perpetuate conflict between the two communities and be detrimental to the interests of both Indians and Fiji. Thirdly, the Government of India still adhered to its principle of common roll. Even if the Colonial Office disagreed with the third proposition, it could not deny the validity of the two preceding ones.

In India, Indian politicians were against recognition of communal separatism, therefore, they could not oblige Muslims in Fiji. Again the intervention of India had proved crucial on a constitutional issue affecting Fiji. It was India also which by its advice was to dampen Muslim hopes of seeing the application of Muslim law in Fiji for that religious group in such matters as inheritance, marriage and divorce.

The Muslim League treated the refusal of separate representation as temporary. During the discussion in the thirties on constitutional change it made new submissions. It altogether repudiated the elective system. Common roll was dismissed as idealism with no real advantage to any community and its continued pursuit was 'a vindictive demand' which had brought 'immeasurable harm' and created racial animosities unlikely to be assuaged for some time. As the Government-chosen road boards and advisory

49 Fiji Muslim League to Col.Sec. 31 Aug. 1932; C.S.O. CF5/2.
50 C.O. to Fletcher Conf. 5 Aug. 1932.
52 C.S.O. CF38/3.
committees had been functioning well, Muslims thought the nomination system would be the best method for the protection of minority rights. The Government ought to resort to nomination immediately and bear in mind separate Muslim representation. One group of Muslims went further and suggested that the Government nominate those born and bred in Fiji, with its interests at heart, not birds of passage who had merely come to reap a fortune, for these could not be trusted as their tactics were aimed at personal gain. When the Letters Patent of 1937 were published the Muslims were disappointed and asked the Governor, unsuccessfully, for an amendment. But when the Governor came to select the two Indian nominated members, one was a Muslim, S.Hasan. Thereafter this became an established convention. Muslims have continued to press for separate representation; the desire still persists and finds frequent expression but remains unsatisfied, and it seems unlikely that it will ever be granted now that Fiji is independent and the urgency for nation-building militates against separatist tendencies.

This is getting ahead of the story and anticipating events yet to be analysed. What ought to be established is that Indians no longer spoke with a single voice on constitutional change. Muslim

53 Those who stipulated this proviso were: A.R.Sahu, M.T.Khan, A.Kalam, Sahu Khan (Snr.), M.Esahaq Khan, Ramzan Khan, Ilahi Khan, Qulam Nabi, Haider Buksh, Mohammed Nazeer Khan. These men were not in the Muslim League which by this stage had become a Sunni organization. These belonged to the Ahmadiyya sect which at the time comprised the better educated and more progressive element, and their newspaper was the Message of Islam. Their request for a Fiji-born was very likely directed against the Hasans, who at this stage were playing a prominent role in guiding the League and Sunni interests. Though the Sunni-Ahmadiyya controversy was raging vehemently at the time, the two groups were united in the call for separate Muslim representation.

54 President, Fiji Muslim League to Gov. 19 Aug. 1937, asked that separate Muslim representation be entrenched in the new Letters Patent. Col.Sec. to Fiji Muslim League, 6 Oct. 1937, replied that the Governor was not prepared to comply. C.S.O. F38/27.

55 No Muslim won election to the Fiji Legislative Council until 1963.
separatism illustrated that it was not just Fijians and Europeans who were afraid of the consequences of a political system where the voice of an ethnic majority might hold sway. Within the Indian community itself, a significant minority, the Muslims, who based their uniqueness on religion, found it equally imperative that Government control should persist. For its part, the Government found itself unable to ignore either the Fijian and European consternation or Muslim uncertainty. It determined its action on an interpretation of Indian politics that took cognizance of the fears of others.
TOWARDS RETROGRESSION

INDIAN advocates of common roll were bound to be isolated. The previous three chapters have amply indicated this: the defeat of the common roll motion in the Legislative Council, its repudiation by Fijian political opinion and the Muslims' counter-demand for separate representation. The error of Indian strategy should have been obvious to the politicians of the community but in their determination to obtain redress for what they considered their grievances and a stigma of inferiority upon themselves they tended to be excessively single-minded. They saw common roll as the panacea, hence they wanted nought else as the initial step in the recognition of their equal status in their new land. But their tactics had the opposite of the desired effect; they proved counter-productive. The Government felt let down, the Europeans were angered, the Fijians appeared threatened and the Indian community became permanently divided. This near unanimous alienation from others proved disastrous not merely for the Indians themselves but for political development through the elective principle in the colony as a whole. Moreover, Indian political assertion coincided with the return of a Labour Government in Britain, a government considered by European settlers in Fiji and Kenya likely to be sympathetic to the Indian cause. The efforts of the Labour Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Passfield to resolve the Kenyan problem gave substance to this belief.¹ And in Fiji events in Kenya were followed closely by both Europeans and Indians.

But it was not just occurrences in Kenya that caused a reaction in Fiji; Passfield's attempt to settle the issue of the municipal franchise aroused an immediately defensive reaction. The Government in Fiji had not been able to accommodate Indian objections to the strict literacy test imposed in 1915.² At the beginning of

¹ See Gregory 1971 Chapter X, 331-374 for a discussion of Passfield and Kenya.

² See Chapter II pp.60-61; Chapter IV pp.123-132.
1931 Passfield communicated to the Governor, Sir Murchison Fletcher, the suggestion of the Government of India that the literacy qualification for the municipal franchise be made the same as that required to qualify as an elector for the Legislative Council. This meant the inclusion of certain Indian languages: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu and Gujarati. Passfield pointed out that the Government had done comparatively little to assist Indians to obtain education in English in local schools hence it was fair that their ability to read or write one of their own stipulated languages should enable them to vote for municipal representatives. Passfield, however, made clear that he was not advocating complete democratization of the municipal constitution which he admitted would lead to Indian domination. He recognized that native interests came first and ultimate control must lie with the Government to ensure that this was not disregarded by an administration dominated by Indians. But, he added, that that was much more important as regards the constitution of the whole colony rather than in connection with municipal affairs. Besides, Passfield argued, Fijian society was founded on land while the towns were the creation of the immigrants. He went on to make several other points which are summarized in the rest of the paragraph. Fijian elements in the municipality were unlikely to be as strong as in the country while urban Fijians were cut off from communal life which the British were in favour of protecting. No substantial injury to Fijian interests would result from Indian control of the municipalities except that it might strengthen Indian demands to control the Legislative Council. Whether Indians in Fiji were suitable to control democratic institutions and work them efficiently experience alone could decide. And the Government must face the fact that Indian demands for elective institutions existed no matter for what reason and must remember that it was easier to administer a system of government acceptable to the governed than one they disliked. Besides the Indians had been brought to Fiji by the Government and there could be no question that with due regard to

3 C.A.8/3.
Fijian interests, they should be treated fairly and without discrimination. Avoiding Indian control of the municipality would be suspected and Indians would see it as a deliberate evasion of reforms demanded and this could not be done if an elected council was maintained. The effect would be an exacerbation of racial feeling. Hence the Secretary of State wished to avoid a drastic measure by the substitution of wholly or largely nominated councils in place of the present elected Municipal Council. As the main point was to ensure efficient continuance of services such as public health, it was essential that these remained in the control of the central Government. The problem was to reconcile popular management of municipal affairs with Government control for efficiency. There were various methods to achieve this. The despatch suggested an elected council with a mayor possessing wide powers and appointed by the central Government. Suva and Levuka should explore the possibility of retaining elected municipal councillors with an official chairman who might have special powers in connection with finance, appointments, etc., either independently of the Council or by way of veto or otherwise. Another check on the elected Council could include the maintenance of an efficient audit, of stores as well as cash and including comparative costing where practicable by a Government official. The Governor could have the power to veto expenditure if the Council failed to maintain or raise the standard of efficiency in public services. Inspections could be instituted - annual or frequent checks on particular services, judicious use of grant-in-aid, retention by central Government of special power in relation to certain services which in more developed communities are normally the sphere of municipal control. Lord Passfield recommended a municipal council elected on a common franchise with the Government retaining wide powers of surveillance. This would neither antagonize Indians nor jeopardize efficiency.

Fletcher discussed the subject with the Executive Council and then sent a lengthy reply.\footnote{L.C.Debates 1935:257.} As he told the Legislative Council
four years later, he opposed the widening of the franchise as advocated by Passfield because it would lead to Indian domination. In his despatch to Passfield he elaborated and his arguments are paraphrased here. The Indian population in Fiji did not have a genuine desire for democratic institutions. The educated element in it were alert and argumentative and would exploit any grievance to the full with the oriental flair for bargaining. These nursed a real grievance against whites who insisted on ignoring them socially. The whites for their part were arrogant because of their skin and regarded coloured persons as inferior. Yet despite admitting this, Fletcher confided in Hedstrom and Scott. He continued that the large majority of the Indians worked on the land and were originally recruited from the lower classes, including untouchables. Fiji-Indians debated the question of representative institutions only now and then; the real stimulus came from India and the nationalists there. Common roll was demanded in Kenya and Fiji because it would lead to Indian domination over the Europeans but there was silence on it in India where various minorities and special interests were catered for by communal franchise. Most of the Fiji-Indians were permanently occupied with domestic matters such as disputes between Arya Samajis and Sanatanis and Hindus versus Muslims, and the sporadic interest of the 1929 election had now faded and the leaders had lost their following. Fletcher ignored the strength of Vishnu Deo, chief advocate of common roll. He concluded that the situation in Fiji was similar to that in Hong Kong after the war where the Chinese preferred Government control to an elected European majority.

Fletcher repeated at length the attitudes of the other communities. The Europeans in Fiji were imbued with Australian ideas on the colour question. The Fijians tolerated but despised and distrusted Indians. Fijian communalism was gradually giving way to individualism which was essential for their survival in competition with Indians and others. At that stage it was unwise to move in the direction of self-government with the more important institutions until the Fijian could hold his own. Fletcher here

5 ibid.
ignored Passfield's valid separation of Fijian interests and municipal control. In his view the interests of the races were divergent. He suggested that the growth of the Colony required Fijian and Indian interests to be separately represented - a specious argument for development necessitated a national not racial approach. Though he conceded that the Indians objected to the present Council because their interests were insufficiently represented he warned against common roll which would put power into the hands of one community. Therefore the Municipal Council ought to be controlled by the Government and sectional interests represented by communally elected candidates. Fletcher quoted the Secretary of Indian Affairs as saying that Indians sought some representation to voice their grievances and that it ought to be borne in mind that though the Fijian population of Suva was a fluctuating one, both the Government and the Fijians had considerable interests in the port there.

In support of his arguments Fletcher had enclosed a memorandum prepared for him by Scott and Hedstrom and submitted on 12 May 1931. The background to this document is noteworthy. On receipt of Passfield's despatch, Fletcher had sent for Hedstrom and Scott. Fletcher already knew that Scott and Hedstrom were against any change in the municipal constitution and were even more opposed to common franchise. Thus it is not unfair to conclude that what Fletcher was in fact seeking was support. This he obtained for the Scott-Hedstrom memorandum emphasized that:

1. common roll in the municipality would lead to an Indian domination and resentment by Fijians and Europeans;
2. it was largely Europeans who had brought the municipality to the present high level of efficiency and they would not happily view sanitation and health, for instance, under Indian control, especially as the most unsanitary and unhealthy areas like Toorak and Rewa Street were those occupied by that community;

6 Scott divulged this in a public address in Suva on 10 Nov. 1933; F.T. 11 Nov. 1933.

7 Both Scott (Chairman) and Hedstrom had served on the commission to consider the Municipal Franchise. The majority report to which they were signatories had advised against any amendment to the existing ordinance (C.P.390/29). See pp.123-132.
able men would refuse to participate in municipal affairs if Indians took over.

There was no immediate action taken by the Colonial Office to Fletcher's reply to Passfield. The delay aided Fletcher for in August 1931 a new Secretary of State for the Colonies took office, a conservative, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister. Fletcher was also assisted by the Indian boycott of the Fiji Legislative Council. During the Governor's consideration of the Passfield proposals the Indians by their own action had no representatives of their own. No onus was therefore placed on the Governor to seek representative Indian opinion and convey it to London. There is little doubt that Indians would have supported the suggestion of including Indian languages as a qualification for the municipal franchise which was already on a common roll basis. But the possibility of making the qualifications for the municipal franchise similar to those in the Legislative Council raised other spectres. If it could be argued in the first instance that literacy qualifications for the municipal vote should be the same as those for the Legislative Council and if this were conceded then the next step could be to press for a similarity of franchise. It might then be contended that if common franchise were permissible for the municipal elections then it ought to be so for the Legislative Council. The prevalence of the common franchise in the municipality could be used to argue that the principle of common roll as such was not invalid. But for Fletcher, the Europeans, the Fijians and the Muslims, the very principle of common roll was abhorrent because it implied Hindu-Indian domination.

When the new Indian representatives entered the Legislative Council in 1932 they again pressed for common franchise. Apart from the Muslims, the Indians in 1932 were still solidly in favour of common roll. Where there was disagreement was in the tactics to be used for the achievement of their goal. The Arya Samaji faction led by Vishnu Deo and responsible for the election of K.B. Singh still favoured boycott. They had been forced to slightly mend their position when Narbahadur Singh had decided to contest the seat for the Southern Indian constituency. The strength of Vishnu Deo and his Arya Samaji supporters was amply illustrated twice. First in the 1932 election when K.B. Singh defeated Narbahadur Singh by
341 votes to 92 and again at the by-election in 1933 necessitated by K.B. Singh's resignation when the Council and then the Secretary of State repudiated his motion for the introduction of common roll. To vindicate his support among the Indians K.B. Singh contested the seat, again his opponent was Narbahadur Singh. This time only 48% of the electors voted and Narbahadur Singh lost his deposit of £25.8

The low poll in the by-election might be interpreted as a decline of interest among the Indians. Even more important was the division that was becoming apparent. For instance, Munsami Mudaliar who had been elected unopposed to the Northern and Western Indian seat did not resign and seek reelection as K.B. Singh did in 1933. Apparently his mandate was to co-operate with the Government.9 This was an indication that the rural Indians were shifting from their earlier policy of boycott. But this did not seem to be the case in the urban/rural Southern constituency which included Suva, if one accepts the analysis published by a non-Arya Samaji newspaper. It tabulated the division among the Indians as follows:10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-cooperationists</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressives</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstructionists</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>663</td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 See Appendix IX for the results.

9 C.S.O. CF5/2. A report speaks of a meeting arranged by two cane growers from Ba, Randhir Singh and Ramkewal Singh, and presided by Munsami Mudaliar, on 11 July 1932. Between 300 and 400 attended and it was resolved that the Indian representative from that constituency should co-operate with the Government in every possible way. When in Suva and in the presence of Vishnu Deo and S.B. Patel, Mudaliar, being a less forceful man in such company, tended to abide by their instructions. But when without their presence, he preferred his own judgement.

10 Vridddhi, 12 Sept. 1932.
In the absence of contrary evidence if the table is accepted as at least approximating the truth then the conclusion is that Indian attitudes in the Southern constituency had moved strongly towards non-cooperation with the Government in the quest for common roll. When the number in this category is added to the obstructionists then it becomes evident that Indian opinion in the area was overwhelmingly negative.

Yet its opponents were not so, particularly Murchison Fletcher. While on leave in England during late 1932 and early 1933 he had visited the Colonial Office and put forward his case against common roll. In May 1933 he had told the Colonial Office that his arguments were based on advice he received from his Executive Council (this included Scott and Marks) and he admitted that he had not hitherto consulted local opinion though he promised that on his return to Fiji he would put to each community the idea of having nominated members for the municipal councils. Fletcher had also consulted the incumbent mayor of Suva, G.F. Grahame as early as 24 September 1932. Grahame argued that the number of Indian electors was on the rise and with improvements in education there would be a rapid growth until sufficient young Indians would qualify to elect their own councillors who would ultimately become a majority. Not even the ward system would be a counter, for only one or two wards would be European and others predominantly Indian because this implied one councillor to so many ratepayers. With the increase in the number of Indians the present difficulty of obtaining suitable candidates for the Council would be aggravated. At all points town affairs touched the interests of large property owners and big businesses and five or six of these corporations expressly or tacitly debarred their employees from participation in municipal politics. For his part the small business man having to tend his affairs himself could not afford the time for any active involvements in municipal affairs. The Council and municipality depended for administration on the Mayor who received no remuneration, having to spend from his own

11 His presence in England coincided with that of Hedstrom and together they had several discussions with officials at Whitehall, including the Secretary of State. Among the topics discussed was the constitution.

12 C.A.8/12.
private accounts and to do a lot more to ascertain efficiency as the
town's affairs grew beyond cleaning footpaths and drains. 13

Fletcher returned to Fiji on 3 August 1933 when the Legislative
Council was in recess. It was to reassemble on 13 October for the
Budget Session and the Governor was to put forward his proposals for
the municipal franchise on this occasion, his earliest opportunity
to do so. Meanwhile he sought to sound out opinion. He was already
aware that the Indian Government which was bound to comment on such an
important issue preferred the elective system with the division of
the municipality of Suva into wards. 14 Provided the Indian
community acquiesced it would accept Government control with Indian
and European members elected on a widened franchise that put Indian
languages on par with English. It recommended the consultation
with and support from Indian opinion. Some time before his budget
speech Fletcher spoke to Vishnu Deo who agreed to the Governor's
proposals to reconstruct the municipal council. 15 Admittedly this
is based purely on Fletcher's account but there is no reason to
doubt his word. Vishnu Deo was frequently neither constant nor
consistent. 16 Also on 9 October, the Inspecting Medical Officer
had told the Governor that he had discussed the subject with
Indians (unspecified) in North-West Viti Levu and to his surprise
had found them favourable to Government control. 17

Fletcher could also count on the support of the two Indian
elected members. Mudaliar as has been mentioned earlier favoured
co-operation. On 23 August 1933 he had been appointed the first

13 C.A.8/13. Minute, Fletcher, 5 Sept.1933
14 Encl. C.O. to O.A.G.Conf. 27 June 1933.
15 C.A.8/15. Minutes, Fletcher, 5 Sept.1933
16 Early in 1932 Vishnu Deo was convicted and fined in a case
involving the dissemination of pornographic literature. Thus
he was disqualified from contesting the elections. He petitioned
the Governor to remove his political disability to enable him to
be a contestant. When his petition failed he changed his
strategy and called for a boycott of the elections. This too
failed when Narbahadur Singh decided to enter the race;
than Vishnu Deo successfully put up K.B. Singh as a
candidate. C.P.11/33.
17 C.A.8/17.
Indian Justice of the Peace. The Governor felt his action justified because Mudaliar had 'a solid block of Indian agriculturalists behind him' though the Arya-Samaji Fiji Samachar ascribed it to continued participation in the Legislative Council and the betrayal of the Indian cause. The Acting Colonial Secretary, A.A. Wright, also felt that Mudaliar was being rewarded for not resigning and resisting pressures from Vishnu Deo to do so. Wright felt Mudaliar remained in council for personal motives which 'may partly have been that he enjoyed the glory and social prestige attached to the position and was not unappreciative of its financial advantages'. Wright concluded:

If in the Indian community he is more or less a cypher, and if it is admitted that he is a 'dummy' member, I do not favour the proposal to make him a J.P.

The Indian member from the Southern constituency, K.B. Singh, was also retreating from his previous uncompromising position. By taking his seat in Council in July 1933 after his by-election victory Singh had defied his supporters who in accordance with their professed policy of non-cooperation expected his resignation. Next Singh had sent through the Secretary of Indian Affairs a letter dated 14 July 1933 to the Clerk of Council with his common roll motion. But he had requested that the letter be deliberately delayed so that by the time the Clerk of Council received it it would be too late within the terms of the Standing Orders for him to introduce his motion in the July Cession. By October he was informing the Governor that he did not regard common roll as important to Fiji-Indians at the time and he would not raise the issue again in the Legislative Council. Instead he would concentrate on 'matters affecting their [i.e. Indians'] social, economic, and general welfare'. And at an interview with the Governor on 7 October 1933 both Singh and Mudaliar had expressed a hope of remaining in the Council. Fletcher, however, knew

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18 C.S.O. CF51/12. Fiji Samachar, 26 Aug. 1933. The decision to make Indians J.P.s was made in the Executive Council in Sept. 1932. It was opposed by Scott and Hedstrom who argued that Indians would abuse their position.
19 C.S.O. CF51/12.
20 ibid.
22 C.S.O. CF5/3.
23 ibid.
before the announcement of his municipal scheme that the two Indian members had been denounced at public meetings for remaining in Council. He could at this early stage ignore this, provided the elected members were with him.

More important Fletcher could expect Fijian opinion not to defy him. The Council of Chiefs in the past had aligned itself with the Government and there was no reason to believe that they would do otherwise on this crucial issue. He could also rely on another quarter. At its 11th Annual Conference (29 September to 10 October 1933) the Viti Cauravou had resolved that Indians should not be chosen as municipal councillors. Since Fiji had been ceded to Britain and not India, Europeans should be appointed instead of Indians. The resolution continued:

India is under Britain - Britain is not under India, therefore it is not right that one belonging to India should rule over Europeans but that the Indian in Fiji should be subject to the Europeans.

The Indians in times past have been the cause of some big happenings in this Colony, and we believe that if their aspirations are realized there may be similar happenings in the days to come. This is a matter of some concern to the Fijian.

We Fijians do not approve of some of the actions and character of the Indians as we see them. It is therefore not possible for us to support the Indian in this their intention and we strongly urge that at no time in the future will it be made possible for them to be appointed to positions of leadership in this Colony.

With equal emphasis the Viti Cauravou disapproved of common roll 'at the present time' for the following reasons:

We are bound by the laws of our land and our customs at the present time.

Only a small percentage is as yet sufficiently educated to undertake these responsibilities.

Very few of us have yet been able to establish ourselves in business undertakings.

It is true that there are more Fijians than any other race in the Colony and the Indians come next in number. Should there be an election on the Common Roll it is clear that a large majority of Indians would be returned. It is our desire to remain united with the Europeans but not with the Indians.

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24 L.C. Debates 1933, 162.


26 ibid. The Government informed the Society that it had not accepted common roll and it would fully safeguard Fijian interests in any change to the constitution of the Legislative and Municipal Councils.
The significance of the Viti Cauravou comments lay in that the society was completely aligned with its chiefs in rejecting Indian political claims and any likelihood of participation with that community and reaffirming an alliance with the Europeans. As the Fijians and Indians were numerically the largest components in the Colony's population it was all the more important for future constitutional change. The alliance of Fijian chiefs and Europeans, both privileged groups, might have been expected. But it seemed that even educated Fijian opinion found similarity of interest with the Europeans; this was based on fear of the Indians.

But the press, both English and Hindi, was hostile; racial and sectarian interests were temporarily shelved in the united condemnation of the proposed changes and these occurred even before Fletcher had delivered his address in the Legislative Council. The Governor's amendments were unanimously rejected as retrogressive because ratepayers were to be deprived of a voice in the choice of their nominees though they would continue to foot the bill. Those deprecating change referred to the excellent record of the Suva Municipal Council in reducing rates: from 10\(\text{g}d\) in the £ during 1927-30 to 10d in 1931, 9\(\frac{1}{2}\)d in 1932 and 8\(\frac{3}{4}\)d in 1933. A council that was progressively charging lower rates was efficient and economical, therefore, it was argued, it required no change. Later Fletcher was to explain:

It is unnecessary for me to say that the Government has no fault to find with the manner in which the Municipalities have hitherto been catered for. The two Councils have done admirable work, and their long record of efficient and economical administration will not be lightly emulated.

The Suva Municipal Council which was to be directly affected at a private meeting on 28 August 1933 voted against Government take-over although it remained silent on the alternative of a wider franchise.

28 ibid.
30 C.A.8/30.
Then early in October at a special meeting the Council resolved to inform the Colonial Secretary:

(a) that the scheme in the form proposed is not acceptable,
(b) the majority of official nominees is not acceptable,
(c) that an official chairman is not acceptable.

With both support and disapproval behind him Fletcher made his announcement of 13 October 1933. It is essential to examine his speech in its entirety because of its significance. He referred to Section 19 of Ordinance IV (1909) which confined the municipal electorate to those able to read, write and speak English and mentioned that the 1927 Committee by a 5 to 4 majority recommended no change. Shortly after his arrival in Fiji the Secretary of State had asked him to consider permitting recognition of those Indian languages sanctioned by the 1929 Letters Patent because if these were sufficient to qualify for the Government of the whole colony then there was no reason why anyone with a knowledge of one of these should be debarred from the affairs of a town or district. To allow this would mean equal recognition of Fijian, Chinese and Samoan languages and 'it was plain that this broadening of the literacy qualification would in effect introduce a municipal common roll'. So he had informed the Secretary of State that while local self-government was valuable training for citizenship, the absence of racial homogeneity in Fiji made this step undesirable in the Colony; it would mean Indian domination and would be resented by Europeans and Fijians. From the incomplete figures, as he admitted at his disposal he deduced that the extension of literacy franchise would mean an Indian majority in the Suva roll, something unwanted by both Europeans and Fijians. In his opinion Indians would not press for common roll when confronted with Fijian-European opposition. Therefore he advised against 'advance in the direction of self-government in respect of the more important institutions of the Colony. . . . and could see no alternative for the municipalities other than

Government control on the lines of the constitution of the Legislative Council. Translated into practical terms, it meant a municipal council with a majority of civil servants and a minority of Indians and Europeans elected on a communal franchise and Fijians nominated by the Governor on the recommendation of the Council of Chiefs. Thus the Europeans and Indians would still separately elect their own representatives and not leave it to the Governor to nominate them. Equal representation of each race was 'an integral part' of the proposals. However, any system of government 'should be as far as possible in accordance with the wishes of the governed'. Consequently Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, the Secretary of State, sought the views of each community separately and each elected member was asked to explain the issue to his constituents and report their decision at the February 1933 session of the Legislative Council. The Governor directed:

The issue is easily defined. It is the choice between on the one hand the introduction of a bill to establish a municipal common roll and on the other acceptance of central Government control.

Considered within the context of the whole announcement 'central Government control' did not necessarily mean the loss of the elective principle in favour of nomination. In the Legislative Council the Government had control despite elections by secret ballot for the choice of six Europeans and three Indians and no civil servant could cast even a single vote for the purpose. But in its letter to the Municipal Council of Suva on 30 August 1933 the Government interpreted 'Government control' to mean that unofficial representatives would be nominated by the Governor. Fletcher aimed to deprive the citizens of Suva and Levuka of any voice in the selection of those who would direct the expenditure of their rates.

The interlude between October 1933 and March 1934 when the municipal constitution was debated in the Legislative Council was used to test opinion. The representatives of the people had been requested to explain the issues to their constituents and to obtain their response.

From the Council of Chiefs meeting during November at historic Bau, the Governor received encouraging support:
Resolution 17: That this Council is emphatically and unanimously in favour of the control of the Municipal Councils of Suva and Levuka being taken over by the Government; of the Mayors being Government nominees; of a nominated official majority on the Council and of the non-official minority consisting of Fijian, Indian, and European members, with equal representation of each of the three races.

Resolution 18: That this Council records its strong and unanimous opinion that Fiji, having been ceded to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, Her Heirs and Successors, the immigrant Indian population should neither directly nor indirectly have any part in the control or direction of matters affecting the interests of the Fijian race.

This coupled with the resolutions earlier passed by the Viti Cauravou strengthened the Governor's hand to the point of making victory certain. The paramountcy of Fijian interests had been the often-repeated proclamation of the colonial regime and the Fijian people were giving their blessing to Fletcher's recommendations. The attitudes of the other communities could not be accepted if they appeared to threaten the Fijian position.

Of the elected members Scott was the first to go to his constituents publicly through a meeting on 10 November 1933 in the Suva Town Hall under the chairmanship of the Mayor of the town. It was well-attended, though not to the extent of 700 people as Scott later asserted, for the capacity of the hall was no more than 400. Though Scott made his usual remarks on the issue, those he was to repeat again and again later, it is worthwhile to note the information that he divulged for the first time. He told his electorate that after Fletcher's arrival in Fiji the new Governor had sent for Maynard Hedstrom and himself and told them: the Secretary of State had requested the Governor's opinion on common franchise in the Municipal Council and the inclusion of five Indian dialects as a qualification to vote as existed in the case of the Legislative Council. Fletcher wanted to know how he could permanently forestall any such steps. And he referred to the memorandum that he (Scott) and Hedstrom had submitted to Fletcher to support the Governor. Scott told the audience that Fiji was a British country and had to be kept so, by British he meant

32 Proceedings, 1933. C.P.8/34.
33 L.C. Debates 1933:124.
34 F.T. 11 Nov. 1933.
35 See p.219.
of Anglo-Saxon parentage. Certain that Government control would come, Scott named officials whom he would recommend to the Governor for nomination. It was not that he did not want Indians represented, he claimed, but he did not think they were fit to manage the affairs of the community. Moreover, Fijians looked to Europeans for leadership and concessions to the Indians would be a betrayal of this trust. To press his point that Indian domination was a reality he quoted (out of context) from the British Labour Party's avowed policy of rapid self-government for the colonies. This had the desired effect upon his audience, which unanimously resolved that democracy was impracticable in a plural society and therefore the alternative of Government control of the municipality of Suva was preferable to that of popular control through common roll. So the Europeans had decided, at least publicly but, more important, in the presence of Sir Henry Scott; and it was done not by secret ballot but by a show of hands whereby each knew of his neighbour's action. Criticism of the meeting was not unexpected in the local Indian press. Scott was accused of frightening his audience with 'a harrowing picture of imaginary domination by Indians' aimed at arousing anti-Indian feelings which would carry the meeting with him.36

The Fiji Times joined the Indian press in the attack on Scott and described the meeting as futile as a test of public opinion.37 It accused Scott of being an echo of the Governor who, and not the Secretary of State for the Colonies, had decided that the choice was either Government control or common roll, and it called on Fletcher to clarify the issue with Whitehall. Was it reasonable merely on the Governor's vague statement of likely Indian domination to hold a quick meeting and then decide hurriedly to hand over the reins to the Government? Indian domination and the Labour Party were both designed, said the editor, 'to consolidate executive control by officials of the country and a few select individuals'.

36 Fiji Samachar 18 Nov. 1933.
37 F.T. 13 Nov. 1933.
Scott and Hedstrom were collaborating with the Governor to ensure the permanence without menace of their own influence in the running of the Colony. Power they could not have, for the constitution of a Crown Colony precluded this danger. But paramount influence they did have, especially when Governors came to the Colony without special knowledge of its problems and relied for advice upon that minority of the marginally socially acceptable and financially successful who wove a protective cocoon around Government House and shielded it from the squalor and dreams beyond. The Governors of Fiji, in the twentieth century, with the possible exception of Sir Eyre Hutson, on arrival were singularly ignorant about the Colony, its needs, its conflicts, the aspirations and fears of the plural society there.

Though from the proposed amendment Suva and Levuka were the towns to be affected, political action was not confined to them. A great deal of agitation took place elsewhere in Viti Levu, especially in the North-West, the argument being that what affected Suva, the capital, and the important centre in the country would have reverberations beyond its boundaries. J.P. Bayly, European member for the Western division, held meetings at Sigatoka, Nadi and Lautoka for his electorate who were told to choose between common roll and Government control. All chose the latter; at Sigatoka there was one dissentient, but at Nadi there was none; in Lautoka a big majority favoured Government control. Hugh Ragg, representing Europeans of the Northern division, found Ba and Penang unanimous in repudiating common roll and choosing the alternative. European public opinion would, albeit reluctantly, surrender their right to favour and concentrate power into the hands of officialdom rather than risk Indian domination. Common roll meant Indian rule, and for European opinion, public or otherwise, this was intolerable. Again these views were expressed in public and voting was by a show of hands. Given the choice between common roll and Government control there is no reason to believe that Europeans even by secret ballot would not have preferred the latter. Throughout, from when it first reared its head to thereafter, Europeans generally had been

38 L.C. Debates 1933:136.
39 ibid.
consistent in remonstrating against common roll and there is no reason to believe that they had undergone a volte face; even men such as Alport Barker, who now opposed Scott and Hedstrom, had no wish for this monster ever. The division lay in the contention of some that the alternatives offered were not the correct ones, and that common roll was not the alternative to the present situation.

The Indians, too, held their public meetings but, unlike their European counterparts, the two Indian members of the Legislative Council were not able to dictate terms. Indian politics was still very much under the thumb of Vishnu Deo and the Arya Samajis, as Government was completely aware. The Secretary of Indian Affairs emphasized this, but added in January 1931 that though Arya Samajis were publicly antagonistic to the nomination system, Vishnu Deo had privately voiced acceptance of Government control either by election or nomination provided the principle of equality was present; this attitude could be taken both as the moderate Indian viewpoint expressed through Mudaliar and K.B.Singh and as representing the masses in so far as they understood equality. McCusty went on that moderate Indian opinion was on the side of settlement of racial differences by Government control while advanced Indian opinion led by Vishnu Deo desired power for its leaders regardless of all other considerations.

The first Indian public meeting was held at Ba on 3 December 1933, with neither of the Indian members of the Legislative Council present. The chief spokesman, C.C.Singh, stated that Indians did not seek domination over other races nor did they want representation in proportion to their numbers, all they desired was to enjoy the citizenship of Her Majesty's Government. They vigorously opposed nomination as retrogressive and asked the Governor to call a conference to discuss the issue. They reiterated that their desire for common roll was 'to prevent bureaucracy being substituted for democracy'.

40 C.S.O. CF5/2.
41 ibid.
42 C.A.8/42. C.C.Singh, Ba, to Gov. 6 Dec. 1933;
The next meeting also took place in North-Western Viti Levu, at Lautoka on New Year's day under the chairmanship of S.B. Patel. Both K.B. Singh and Mudaliar were present. According to the former - who made many references to the point - the meeting was not a representative one because no representatives of Muslims, South Indians or the Sanatani sect of Hindus participated, and those attending did so in their individual capacity. Discussion of representation in the Legislative Council was dropped and time devoted to the issue of land (the difficulty of Indians in obtaining enough of it under satisfactory tenure), an issue particularly relevant to the cane-farmers of the region.

The meeting was well-attended and Hugh Ragg was present during the afternoon session. Resolutions were passed to be transmitted to the Governor of Fiji and the Viceroy of India:

1. A Commission be appointed with adequate Indian representation to examine the land question.
2. District committees with S.B. Patel as chairman were to be set up to investigate the land question and to submit their findings to the Governor.
3. A Planters' Association should be formed to unify Indian planters in Fiji to safeguard their interests.
4. The Conference adhered to common roll as communal representation was not in Indian interests and unanimously protested against the attitude of the Indian Members of the Legislative Council and called for their resignation.
5. The Conference was satisfied with the municipal constitution and supported the petition of the citizens of Suva.
6. The Conference called for a monster petition to be sent to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The idea of setting-up farmers' associations originated with Vishnu Deo after he had been unsuccessful in forming a colony-wide organization which he wished to name the Indian National Congress of Fiji.

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43 C.S.O. CF5/2.
46 Fiji Samachar 6 Jan. 1934.
The meeting, designated All-Fiji Indian Conference, served as an expression of essentially Arya Samaj attitudes on local politics. It certainly found no favour with the two Indian members of the Legislative Council for K.B. Singh, in a letter to, and later in an interview with, the Governor, branded it as hostile and propagandist. He suggested that henceforth Government officials be present at all such meetings to refute false allegations, that an intelligence network be established immediately for Indian affairs, court action be taken against ringleaders who incited people to disrupt peace, and that conveners of meetings should submit their agenda to the police or the District Commissioner.47

Since both the above meetings had repudiated the Governor's scheme a third was called especially to approve them, with assistance from Hugh Ragg and the Manager of the C.S.R. Company in Ba.48 The chairman was one John Bairagi, a Fiji-born Indian formerly a minister of the local Methodist Church who had broken away with a group of followers out of opposition to the European hierarchy of his Church. The meeting was held at Ba on Sunday 7 January 1934, with about 400 people present and its resolutions indicate that it achieved what it set out to accomplish.49

1. it expressed gratitude to the Government for taking steps to provide land for Indians and extending the term of tenure;
2. the meeting representing all sections of the community maintained that the Lautoka conference was not representative of Indians as Muslims and Sanatanis did not participate;
3. the Indian M.L.Cs. should co-operate with the Government in the interests of the whole Colony;
4. the Indian community of Ba requested that Government take steps to discourage civil servants from taking part in public meetings of a political nature.

47 C.S.O. CF5/2. C.A.8/47.
48 K.B. Singh wrote to the Governor on 9 Jan. 1934: 'This meeting was arranged to repudiate the resolutions passed by the Lautoka meeting.' C.S.O. CF5/2.
Significantly there was no outright condemnation of common roll or overt appeal for Government control and nomination. Its condemnation of the Lautoka conference as non-representative did not imply automatic denunciation of its resolutions. Nor did a call for co-operation by the Members of the Legislative Council mean approval of Fletcher's designs. But its vagueness left it open to interpretation by K.B. Singh, Mudaliar and Fletcher as support for their ends. However, the meeting was not without incident and methods advocated by K.B. Singh and Mudaliar were even less democratic than the constitution they sought to abrogate. During the meeting C.C. Singh was denied permission to speak as he was from the opposite camp. When C.C. Singh persisted in being heard, Mudaliar ordered one Ram Jag, variously referred to as a police clerk and police constable, to arrest him. Ram Jag retaliated by not only refusing but threatening to disperse the meeting and put K.B. Singh and Mudaliar in gaol instead. Later K.B. Singh sought the punishment of Ram Jag and wanted him made an example to other civil servants, who he claimed, were encouraging attacks on the Indian councillors. The Governor did not respond.

No such meetings were held in Suva, the town to be affected. No attempt was made to ascertain what Suva Indians, who comprised anywhere from 30% or 42% to 48% of the population thought. As his constituency was also the stamping-ground of Vishnu Deo, K.B. Singh did not desire an open confrontation which might prove disadvantageous to himself. In fact, he was now in conflict with the Arya Samaji faction which had previously ensured his election. Later Indians in Suva were to sign a petition against Government control of the municipality. In view of the neglect, K.B. Singh could hardly be said to have a mandate to speak for his electorate on this particular issue. Another factor needing comment is the interest generated among politically aware Indians outside Suva. They seem to have seen the Governor's intentions as having ramifications beyond the municipal constitution and striking at the root of what they championed as their right as citizens, that is,

50 K.B. Singh to the Governor, 9 Jan. 1934; Mudaliar to the Governor, 7 and 8 Jan. 1934 in C.S.O. CF5/2.
common franchise, which alone to them spelled true equality.

According to the public meetings the European community favoured Government control while Indians were generally opposed to it. There were no public meetings for the Fijians; their chiefs by birth possessed the right to speak for their people, a right upheld by British law. Fijians had without ambiguity pronounced their stand on the threat of Indian domination which Fletcher thought a possibility.

In response to the Indian meeting at Ba in December 1933, the Governor and the Colonial Secretary met a deputation of Indians, K.B. Singh, M. Mudaliar, John Grant, Nune Khan, Nawaz Khan (Ba), at which Sir Henry Scott and Hugh Ragg were also invited as representatives of the European community. The Governor gave his by now familiar excuses for intended Government control which along with equal representation could alone provide lasting peace while the widening of the franchise would degenerate into 'constant friction with other races'. K.B. Singh, though not disagreeing entirely, said that an argument (not necessarily his own) for common roll was that recently in Mauritius a predominantly Indian electorate had returned to council only Europeans. John Grant pointed out that Indians neither sought to dominate nor wished to be dominated by others, so Government control with equal representation would satisfy all and there appeared to be consensus on this among the deputation. This was an Indian view but how widely it was held is debatable; the deputation did not claim to represent anyone, least of all John Grant who appeared at Government House with any deputation that invited him; he measured his stature by the number of times he could rub shoulders with Anglo-Saxons; when, where, why and how were immaterial to him. Two of the intended delegation were unable to be present - one C.C. Singh from Ba, an opponent of nomination, and the other Dr. C.M. Gopalan, a South Indian who originally came to Fiji in the service of the British Government. Both no doubt found a way of being absent from Government House because their views clashed with those of the establishment and they did not wish to be part of any settlement which would compromise them.

51 C.S.O. CF5/2.
With this background and the atmosphere created by it, the
debate on the municipal constitution commenced on 28 March 1934.
It was a debate which never rose beyond race baiting; minds were
already made up well before the exercise, no one was influenced by
what another said, all spoke their set pieces and voted accordingly.
At the outset the Governor stated: 'This motion is definitely not
a Government proposal.'\textsuperscript{52} Hence officials were not to participate
in the debate.\textsuperscript{53} And the mantle of introducing the motion fell
upon the Senior Elected Member, Sir Maynard Hedstrom.\textsuperscript{54} Again no
new arguments were put forward and Hedstrom admitted that what he
said was his personal view only, for his recent absence from the
Colony prevented his consulting his constituents.\textsuperscript{55} But he
revealed that the Levuka Municipal Council, which was in his
electorate, had written to inform him that they wanted no change as
in their opinion the choice did not lie between common roll and
Government control. This strengthens the contention that
reference to the wishes of the people was a sham and that the
Governor merely sought corroboration; disagreement he ignored.
Hedstrom sought to emphasize that Fiji could not stand still; if
it did not decide now, there might not be another chance; he too
feared for the future under a Labour Government at Westminster.
Continuing with the existing literacy qualification would only
postpone the day of a non-European Municipal Council, with Indians

\textsuperscript{52} L.C.Debates 1934:120.

\textsuperscript{53} Minutes Ex.Co. 26 Mar. 1934.

\textsuperscript{54} The full motion read: 'That whereas His Excellency the Governor,
in his Address delivered on October 13, 1933, stated that the
choice before this Colony with regard to Government of
Municipalities is:

(a) the introduction of a bill to establish a Municipal Common
Roll;

(b) the acceptance of Central Government Control. In the
opinion of this Council the acceptance of alternative (b)
will be in the best interests of the Colony.'
(L.C.Debates 1934:120.)

\textsuperscript{55} L.C.Debates 1934:120-122.
multiplying rapidly and acquiring a knowledge of English. 

Sir Henry Scott, the seconder, was more lengthy in his exposition. He agreed with Hedstrom's comments and added that since 1915 Indians had pressed for a greater voice in the Municipality of Suva and if the present system continued the result would be domination by:

that one section of the community unused to Government by tradition and custom, not able to carry on the trials and difficulties of Government, unused by environment and education or by upbringing to be able to control the rest of his fellowmen. 57

That here was an inaccurate comment on the Indian past is irrelevant; what matters is that it clearly amplifies the racial bigotry and arrogance of the speaker. And on such a mind the British Governor placed complete faith for guidance. Scott contended that 99% of the Europeans were with him and the residue 1% comprised 'an odd crank or two'. In a country of different races 'with different outlooks, with no affinity of race or creed, with no environment the same, with no upbringing the same', the only solution was to put power in the hands of the Government which was independent and acted with fairness and honesty. What Scott envisaged was a racially segregated country dominated by a European government; he wished for no merger, no mixing, the pure must be undefiled.

Only Barker and Major Willoughby Tottenham disagreed among the Europeans. The Major spoke sense, although he changed his mind later, in arguing that the existing system would enable Fijians to acquaint themselves with politics and their increasing involvement would dissipate any danger of Indian domination and they need fear no danger at the hands of any British Government, not even one led by the Labour Party. Barker said he opposed both common roll and Government control. With a mandate from the Suva Municipal Council and as its Mayor, he preferred no change. Besides, it was only a matter of opinion that in a few years the Municipal Council would fall into non-European hands. If such a contingency arose, and the Government discovered irregularities, it had ample powers to intervene as all by-laws needed approval of the Governor in Council; the annual report of proceedings and annual estimates had to be submitted to the Governor who could even dissolve the Council in case

56 ibid:122-128.
57 ibid:125.
58 ibid:137.
59 ibid:128-132.
of irregularities. Fletcher, however, was unconcerned whether a non-European council would or would not be able to run the municipality efficiently, what he sought was to avoid any likelihood of control slipping out of European hands into those of non-whites. Nor did Barker's attempt to discount the Labour Party bogey have any effect. But two shots of Barker's did hit the mark; first he pointed out that the public knew nothing of the proposals till 30 August 1933 when a letter from the Colonial Secretary was sent to the Mayor referring to the recent Government House conference and the proposals, and secondly Barker accused the Governor of being the initiator. However, it was not till November of the following year that the Governor divulged his real motives and attempted to untangle the devious web of secrecy around the subject.

Considering that it was their community which was under attack the Indian members might have been expected to refute the charges. Mudaliar spoke a bare few lines: that Indian opinion was divided, and a large section in his constituency was willing to accept any constitution which provided equal representation for all races. His lack of performance indicated the lack of constructive leadership in the Indian community. Usually he spoke after K.B. Singh and merely echoed him. K.B. Singh spoke for much longer and declared his preference for common roll as it existed in the municipal constitution. Most Indians he thought were satisfied with the literacy qualification, and the idea of equal representation was good, but not so the methods of attaining it. He denied that the Indian population would increase beyond 35% because only business men and the better class of Indians could afford to reside in Suva, the rest favoured the cheaper outskirts. If there was any risk of domination by any one race, then two or three of each community should be elected on a common roll. Here was worthwhile suggestion but the speaker was thirty years before his time and under the

60 ibid:128.
61 ibid:132-135.
62 C.A.8/62.
circumstances it is doubtful if Fletcher, Hedstrom or Scott would have
given it more than a thought. That it came from K.B. Singh was
sufficient to ensure it oblivion. He added that the right to choose
one's own counsel was not denied even the most hardened criminal
among British subjects and here the privilege of choosing one's
representatives was being denied to the people. The principle of
no taxation without representation was being discarded. Why should
a constitution hitherto in accordance with the Deed of Cession
suddenly conflict with it? No answer was given. He suggested
adoption of Sir Henry May's scheme of 1912 of a nomination system
under Government supervision only, as he agreed with that Governor
that to deprive the people of the franchise once it had been granted
was a serious matter. The nomination system was being used as a
threat but Indians would prefer it to communal franchise. The
reason for the second half of his statement K.B. Singh did not give.
At least under communal franchise people elected their own
representatives, but under nomination even this limited opportunity
was absent. Nomination was also made on the basis of race, but by
someone else, and it precluded the development of popular leaders.
Communal franchise permitted limited political development,
including the rise of parties with their own platform and policies
which though tending to be racially orientated were not without the
possibility of some inter-racial accommodation given the right
leadership. None of these was possible under a system whereby the
Governor chose an equal number of 'leaders' from each race; these
were usually pro-Government men, not likely to form coalitions
against those that had elevated them lest they find themselves
omitted at the next roll call.

The Fijian members, nominees of the Council of Chiefs as much as
of the Governor, spoke as expected. They were aligned with the
Government; Sukuna said that democracy might carry them 'to a point
where we would rather not go'. Before the vote was taken the
Governor once more predicted certain peril if the alternative he
offered were not accepted and denied that he was the initiator.
Hedstrom and Scott made pathetic attempts to assist Fletcher in his

63 ibid:135-136.
efforts to shift responsibility from himself. The motion carried, only the two Indian members and two Europeans voted against it.\textsuperscript{64} But the battle was not yet over; it was to drag on until the end of 1935.

The two Indian members had voted against the motion because, as they informed Fletcher, they had been elected on a common roll ticket and could not openly abandon it.\textsuperscript{65} They added that they had come to the conclusion that Government control and equal representation for each community was the best solution for Fiji and in their opinion Indians of influence supported them. In a letter shortly afterwards (dated 15 April 1934) they advocated the imposition of the nomination system for both Municipal and Legislative Councils until common roll was attained.\textsuperscript{66} Both thought nomination would remove fear from Fijian minds and that of minorities about domination by any particular race and racial co-operation as well.\textsuperscript{67} A few days before writing the letter they had, in yet another interview, informed the Governor that Indian opinion was moving towards acceptance of the nomination system. Fletcher expressed pleasure with the information.\textsuperscript{68} Fletcher was always willing to receive Indians for he minuted: 'I think it is generally wise to grant an interview to a leading Indian, if asked for. The Indians in my experience set considerable store by this.'\textsuperscript{69} From their earlier statements Fletcher knew that Hedstrom and Scott already favoured the nomination system. In fact as early as 1923, even before the Indian had been enfranchised, the Europeans had made it explicit that they would be prepared to revert to the nomination system and accept the abrogation of the elective principle.\textsuperscript{70}


\textsuperscript{65} \textit{C.S.O. CF5/4.}

\textsuperscript{66} ibid.

\textsuperscript{67} ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{C.S.O. F51/1.}

\textsuperscript{70} Rodwell to C.O. Tel. 14 June 1923; C.O. 83/165.
Already the process was under way to erect safeguards against Indian domination in the municipalities through giving the Government the power to select the representatives of the various communities. And the Indian representatives themselves advocated an identical step for the Legislative Council which with the Governor and his Council exercised jurisdiction over the whole colony. Fletcher could not refuse such an offer. Why take half a step when the opportunity existed for a complete one.

By May 1934 Fletcher was prepared to initiate moves to eliminate the elective principle altogether from Fiji. Already the process was underway for the municipalities and it became linked with similar steps for the Legislative Council. With these intentions the Governor wrote to the Secretary of State and enclosed with his despatch two letters in support, one from K.B. Singh and Mudaliar another from Scott and Hedstrom. Fletcher stated that there was a growing resentment against the Arya Samaj party and the Muslims were pressing for a separate roll. The Europeans were alive to rapid Indian progress and recognized that some degree of concession could not be indefinitely postponed. They considered they would be adequately compensated by the substitution of nomination in place of the elective principle as they would thus be freed from the growing danger of control of the European electorates by people of mixed blood. Some remedy was essential as Europeans would never tolerate this domination. Moreover, Indians would not desist from agitating until they obtained equal status. Europeans and Fijians would unite and go to extreme lengths to oppose common roll. Equal representation with nomination was the only solution. He could not recommend that Government take the initiative in the matter. Europeans were prepared to do it if they were certain of official support. They would combine with Fijians to support equal representation with nomination but would together defeat this measure if the elective principle were retained. Indians had assured him they would accept equal representation with nomination. There would be criticism. Indians politically were still insisting on

71 C.A.8/71.
common roll and would be sensitive if it were ridiculed. Some Europeans too would be averse to nomination because they were unaware of the 'half-caste' danger which could not be announced publicly. An alternative might be election for Indians and nomination for the others but he could not advocate this step. After careful consideration the Secretary of State found himself unable to express an opinion on the solution offered. But this was not a rejection of the Governor's plan. At least it left the situation undecided and Fletcher could state his case personally when he visited England early the following year on leave.

The Governor's plans for the Legislative Council Constitution remained a secret. In the meantime political activity was largely devoted to organizing opposition to Fletcher's scheme for the municipalities. During the year his opponents devoted much of their time to preparing petitions to be sent to London. From Levuka 74 signatories petitioned the Governor that Section 19 of Ordinance IV of 1909 should not be altered in any way whatsoever; and the petitioners included Indians to whom the contents had been explained by an interpreter.73 The Levuka Council, still being pressured by Maynard Hedstrom to join him, seemed unconvinced. The Mayor of Levuka, Robinson, wrote that control of the municipality should remain in the hands of ratepayers but if the Secretary of State thought that there was no other alternative then they would prefer Government control.74 According to him the racial composition of the Levuka Council roll was Europeans and Part-Europeans 92, Indians 13, Chinese 6, Samoans 4, Fijians 2, a total of 117. With Levuka no longer having any economic attraction and its population tending to be stable or to show a decline, the racial preponderance of Europeans was unlikely to alter unless in some distant future, the 'pure' whites came to be outnumbered by the Part-Europeans - this too was a dangerous demon.

The Municipal Council in Suva continued to be adamant and on 22 March 1934 resolved once more that it did not wish to have the constitution altered in any way. It complained to the end that it

72 C.A.8/72.
73 C.A.8/73. C.S.O. CFL5/1.
74 C.A.8/74.
had not been consulted on the new Bill nor its arguments taken into consideration. A petition was submitted asking that the franchise be widened to include the five Indian languages recognized by the Letters Patent and that the municipal constitution be not amended in any other way. There were 376 signatories: 140 out of the 25 Europeans on the roll being civil servants were not asked to sign. The Governor commented that a large number of the petitioners belong to the group known as the 'Beach' who opposed all Government proposals. Barker, the instigator of the petition, was 'inclined to be obsessed with the dignity and importance of his office as mayor, to a point where, preferring not to see, he is deliberately blind'. And Barker was accused of being the first to resent the election of an Indian to the Municipal Council, an event which was very probable as the proportion of Indian to European electors had risen from 1/16th in 1927 to 1/4 in 1934.

There was some reason for doubt about the petition. Just as a public meeting which made decisions by a show of hands exposed to all the behaviour of the audience, so too did a public petition. Open refusal to sign would have given offence to the Mayor, an important social creature in a small community. In fact, the mover and seconder of the motion at Scott's meeting on 10 November 1933, A.H. Marlow and Thomas Horne, had both attached their signatures to the petition - Marlow because he felt that his action would be insignificant as the Secretary of State was going to order the nomination system, while Thomas Horne claimed to have signed without reading the petition and on discovering its purport wanted his name removed from it. Another said he did not believe in the memorial

76 C.A.8/76.
77 The roll was made up of 25 Europeans and Part-Europeans, 106 Indians, 9 Chinese and 22 Fijians.
78 C.A.8/78.
79 C.A.8/79.
but being a business man had attached his name to it at the Mayor's personal request and as a result received a good contract from the Council.

There were other petitions from Indians. One with 106 signatures sought the continuance of the status quo, another from 86 ratepayers and occupiers wanted a change because under the present constitution with European domination Indian residential areas were discriminated against and roads and streets there received scant or no attention, while requests for lighting and improvements were ignored. Further, there were no toilet facilities for women who came to the Suva market from the rural areas; Indian municipal baths were inferior to those reserved for whites only. This petition was endorsed by one with 400 names from the Northern and Western divisions. Yet another petition was sent later by John Grant and 47 others favouring Government control because of the unsatisfactory treatment of Indians. While too much emphasis cannot be put on these documents, they illustrate at least a cleavage of opinion in the community. Of course, the point to remember is that if any particular petition were sponsored by socially prominent men in the community it was difficult for their brethren to refuse support if directly approached.

While the fate of the municipal franchise hung in the balance an even more important constitutional issue was emerging. It saw light when on 24 October 1934 during the debate on the Appropriation Bill K.B. Singh made the request that if an undertaking were given that common roll would be introduced ultimately then he and many others would accept an equal number of seats for each community. He went on to refer to a petition from 400 Indians from Northern and Western Viti Levu who favoured nominated representatives in the Legislative Council. Later in the same debate he explained:

There are some people who prefer the elective system, but there is a number of leading Indians who advocate the nominative system with an equal number of seats in the Legislative Council.

\[60 \text{ L.C. Debates 1934:389.} \\
61 \text{ ibid.} \\
62 \text{ Fiji Samachar 18 May 1935. C.A.8/82.} \\
63 \text{ L.C. Debates 1934:389.} \\
64 \text{ ibid.} \]
Council, provided the Government is prepared to take one of the Indians on the Executive Council. 85 Singh who in June 1934 had been made a J.P. was by the end of the year receiving considerable praise from the Governor. In December Fletcher described him to the Secretary of State as a staunch government supporter, a man of some personality and independent outlook, and certainly no sycophant. 86 Singh now stood on the opposite pole from where he had been when he first entered the Council. And the year 1934 ended on the note of Singh and Mudaliar having relinquished their advocacy of common roll. Perhaps even more significant was the likelihood of a double constitutional change, in the Municipal Councils of Suva and Levuka and in the Legislative Council: a change that was to be retrogressive. Concerning the municipal franchise the Government had already stated its case and the steps it intended to take though it had not yet (in 1934) brought forward the bill to amend the existing ordinance. With this change a certainty in the following year another affecting the Legislative Council was in the making. For the constitutional future of Fiji 1935 could be a crucial year.

85 ibid:396.
86 C.A.8/86.
THE STEP BACKWARDS

In the new year it was K.B. Singh who took the initiative when he intimated to the Governor that he hoped to introduce a motion favouring four nominated members for each race. Maynard Hedstrom offered to be seconder, and Henry Scott and Hugh Ragg agreed to give support. Singh discussed his plans with the Governor who claimed the Government could take no part in such a motion or cast its vote. It would observe strict neutrality. Nor could he give any indication of how the Secretary of State might react. The interview, however, threw some light on K.B. Singh's real motives. According to Singh all fair-minded Indians wanted a nominated body instead of an elected one dominated by the Arya Samaj. At the next election Vishnu Deo and his party would try to return candidates to all three seats and after a while would raise the common roll issue. Singh's own success and that of others at the polls would depend on their ability to turn Indians away from common roll to other issues. To attain this he would move a motion in the final session on the land question which was uppermost in Indian minds. He even wished the present Council could adopt this measure if he required time to consider a change in the next Legislative Council. It seemed that by this stage Singh was thinking of his own political future.

Before K.B. Singh could bring his motion in the Council two Indian deputations led by Vishnu Deo and A.D. Patel saw the Governor on successive days. They argued that K.B. Singh and Mudaliar had lost touch with their electors and nomination was their only means of

1 C.A.9/1.
2 C.A.9/2.
3 C.A.9/3.
5 C.S.O. CF38/3.
retaining this seats. Patel stated that a Muslim candidate had an equal chance with anyone else in an election for Hindus and Muslims lived harmoniously - either he was ignorant of recent events or glossing over the facts. In condemning nomination as an 'anti-democratic and retrogressive step', the deputation stated:

the people nominated by the Government will be on the whole the people who will be acquiescent to Legislative and Executive measures irrespective of whether they will be in the interest or against the interest of the community.

Any proposed change ought to be deferred until the new Council after the election, which could be used to ascertain the wish of the electors who would certainly favour the elective principle. To strengthen the case of the deputation Vishnu Deo organized petitions opposing nomination as contrary to British ideals. 6

On 16 May 1935, K.B. Singh moved:

That in the opinion of this Council it would be in the best interests of the Colony and the various races resident therein if the European and Indian Members as well as the Fijian Members were nominated and not elected - an equal number of seats to be reserved for each of the three communities. 7

There was nothing new or outstanding in the mover's speech. Though he still expressed his preference for common roll as the panacea, he maintained that, in lieu of this system, nomination would be the best alternative. Hedstrom, who seconded, appeared to adopt a more liberal view: he conceded that there was a good deal to be said for equality of status for Indians; if it were not granted then pressure for common franchise would continue from India. He admitted that nomination would be criticized by sections of the European and Indian communities but would receive the support of the more moderate and the thinking section of the European community, and also the support of the more moderate and loyal section of the Indian community. 8 By the 'loyal section' he meant those Indians who agreed with him. This was borne out by the remarks of Scott who argued that nomination was a retrogressive step. His remarks implied that a certain section of the Indian community despite its

6 C.A.9/6.
7 L.C. Debates 1935:78.
8 ibid:83.
ability was politically unacceptable to him and nomination would ensure that this group did not dominate. He was referring to the Arya Samajis, about five thousand in an Indian population of about 80,000. If 6% could dominate, then the remaining 94% was permitting them to do so. Besides, the majority, except for Muslims, preferred them as leaders because they were able to serve their community. The whole argument was specious. Scott had no objection to domination by Europeans although they were a minority. Further, he wished to ensure that the Europeans controlled and dominated their own electorate without having their influence diminished by an increasing number of 'half-caste'-voters.

Equally dubious was his argument that the Government should listen to K.B. Singh and M. Mudaliar as the constitutionally elected representatives of the Indian community. He did not advise this step when these two earlier sought common roll, nor did he take this view in 1929 when three elected Indians advocated the same measure.

Neither the officials nor the three Fijians nominated members took any part in the debate. Opposition came from three elected Europeans, Barker, Bayly and Willoughby Tottenham. The European representatives split equally and the motion was carried by the support given by the two Indian members to the more reactionary element. In his despatch the Officer Administering the Government, A.A. Wright, suggested that the Colonial Office accept the motion. He mentioned that the very important argument that change was necessary, because of possible Part-European domination of the European electorate, was not used in the Council for reasons of expediency. He also asked that the present Council which expired on 27 July be extended for another year because it was highly undesirable to hold elections that year if a constitutional change was contemplated. The reason was obvious. Those who opposed nomination wished the proposal to be tested during the election. Officialdom preferred not to succumb to this test for fear of defeat. If there was overwhelming support for nomination as officials believed then there should have been no reason for the anxiety.

An affirmative vote would have strengthened the Government's hand and scotched opposition.

On the day after K.B.Singh's motion, the Chief Police Magistrate introduced the Municipal Institutions (Amendment) Bill. Its aim was twofold: the Levuka Municipality was to be abolished from 1 July 1935 and the town was to come under the Townships Ordinance of 1928 and Suva from 1 January 1936 was to have a Town Board. The new Board was to consist of 13 members, 7 of these were to be officials and the remaining 6 were to be nominated from the Indian, Fijian and European communities - two from each ethnic group. The Chairman and Deputy Chairman were to be officials. The debate on the Bill revealed no new arguments for or against the amendments; these had been voiced earlier. Its opponents argued that the proposed changes were either unnecessary or unwanted. K.B.Singh claimed that under the existing system Indian interests were receiving inadequate treatment by the Council and this inequality would be remedied by Government control. Speaking in favour of the amendment, the Officer Administering the Government and Chairman of the Legislative Council reiterated that the reason behind the changes was Indian domination. He stated:

As far as I am aware the only new circumstances affecting this question which have occurred in the last eighteen months have been . . . a large number of Indian ratepayers have been added to the electoral roll in Suva, and that means that the possibility - if it is a possibility - of Indian domination of the Council under the present constitution has been brought a step nearer. The Indian members have, I think very wisely, changed their minds because they realise that if there should be Indian domination in the Municipal Council it would never be accepted by the two communities. The European community whose brains, enterprise, and capital have made the town of Suva what it is today would never accept it, and the Fijian members would regard it as a breach of faith. The Fijians handed over this Colony to Queen Victoria with their tacit approval of the European community being associated with the Government in the task of government, and they would very strongly resent Indian domination in the Municipal Council of Suva which is the chief town and the only town of importance in the Colony.

10 See for instance the speeches of T.W.A.Barker (L.C.Debates 1935:137-38) and J.P.Bayly (ibid:139-40).

11 L.C.Debates 1935:138-139. This was denied by T.W.A.Barker who was then also the Mayor of Suva. (ibid:140.)

12 L.C.Debates 1935:141.
He made it equally clear that the Bill was not being introduced as a consequence of any deficiency on the part of the present or past councillors. The Bill was passed without any difficulty and became Ordinance XV of 1935. There were two important attempts (albeit unsuccessful) to amend the bill as originally presented. Scott wanted the Council to be reduced to six members all nominated by the Governor; three were to be official and one from each of the three communities (i.e. Indian, Fijian, European). He wanted the Chairman and Deputy Chairman to be chosen by the Governor though not necessarily from the officials only. This was supported only by the six European elected members. Barker though still opposed to the principle of change, favoured Scott's suggestion because in his view the Governor would be unable to find two Fijian unofficial members. Later Hedstrom proposed a similar change except that while Scott sought three officials, Hedstrom favoured four.

The Ordinance had been passed but before it could become law it had to receive the assent of the Crown. As this took time, its opponents felt that all was not lost yet. This was not the Government's attitude. For it the ordinance was the final step in the issue of the municipal franchise. Half the war had been won. It was time for the next battle to make success complete. And on 1 November 1935 during the Budget Session, Fletcher introduced the issue of amendments to the constitution of the Legislative Council. Again possible Indian domination and the obligation to safeguard Fijian interests were emphasized. He maintained that Fijians were afraid that the rapidly increasing Indian population and the demand for a common roll may bring about constitutional changes under which representation in the Legislative Council will pass largely, if not wholly, into Indian hands. Therefore the Fijians considered that nomination was the only practical means of securing adequate representation in the Legislative Council of both

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13 ibid.
14 ibid:144-145.
15 ibid:147-149.
16 ibid:159-164.
17 ibid:161.
European and Fijian opinion, and the only means whereby Fijian interests will be permanently safeguarded.\textsuperscript{18}

Though this reason was an important factor in the attempt to abolish the elective principle there was another. Since it was being voiced publicly for the first time it is worth quoting Fletcher's reference to it in full so as not to misrepresent them:

In 1910 the position of the Half-Caste community was discussed in the Council, upon a motion introduced by the European Elected Members, and it was recommended that Half-Castes should be eligible for admission to the European roll, subject to the conditions that:-

(a) One parent must be of European descent.
(b) A candidate must be able to speak, read, and write the English language.
(c) He must possess the property qualification required of Europeans.
(d) He must pass an educational test.

At the date of this proposal the number of Half-Castes able to comply with these requirements was strictly limited, but during the ensuing twenty-five years circumstances changed. The spread of education and an improved wage position have brought it about that the restrictive effect of conditions (b) and (c) has been greatly diminished. Condition (a) is not observed, and condition (d) has never been adopted, and is not included in the Letters Patent. There are on the present roll, as nearly as can be ascertained, 1,036 European electors and 459 Half-Caste electors. The Half-Caste population numbers approximately 1,000 less than the European population.

Certain responsible Europeans have intimated their serious concern that the representation of their interests should have passed so largely under the control of electors who are not members of their community, and they express the fear that before long the so-called European roll may become in practical effect a Half-Caste roll. These Europeans claim that the Colony's major industries have been established by European capital and owe their prosperity to European management. They point to the fact that the leading business houses and banks are European in constitution and control. They argue that the newly discovered gold-fields depend for their development upon the introduction of European money and skilled European personnel. They refer to the right of racial representation which has been granted to the Fijians and Indians, and they ask that the similar right, which the Europeans formerly possessed, should be restored to them by means of nomination of Members by the Governor.

\textsuperscript{18} ibid.
There is another angle from which some Europeans view this question of nomination. They show that in all tropical Colonies Europeans form a very small fraction of the population - in Fiji the percentage is approximately 2% - and they contrast the present European position in, for example, Ceylon on the one hand, where there is now a common electoral roll, and in the Straits Settlements on the other, where the Legislative Council is nominated. They point out that in Ceylon a European has scant prospect of success at the polls, whereas in the Straits Settlements European interests have a strong majority representation in the Council. In the Straits Settlements the Europeans number less than one per cent of the population.

The Medical and Health Report, which is laid on the Table today shows the rate of natural increase per thousand in 1934:
- Indians, 27.62;
- Fijians, 18.08;
- Half-castes 15.29;
- Chinese, 10.84;
- Europeans, 1.87.

There are many who apprehend that, if the electoral system is maintained, the rapidly increasing preponderance of the Indians must inevitably result, sooner or later, in the merging of the present communal rolls in one common roll, and they urge nomination as the only permanent safeguard of the important stake which European interests possess in the country. They regard nomination as the only means by which the balance can be kept permanently even between the communities.

The indication is clear, Fletcher also wished to protect the influence in Fiji of the pure Europeans not merely from the Indians but from the part-Europeans as well. It would be self-deception to pretend that Fletcher was motivated solely by high-minded principles of protecting the Fijians.

Fletcher also emphasized the divisions within the Indian community and the anxiety of the Muslims with the existing franchise. Again he was largely motivated by his distrust of Indian aspirations:

The supporters of non-cooperation have convened meetings and sponsored memorials in which they strongly oppose nomination, are emphatically in favour of the franchise, and urge the continuance of the present system of election; but at the same time they state that the failure of the present constitution to bring about harmony and goodwill between the different communities is due to the fact that the constitution is not liberal and wide enough. The politicians, who make these professions, will hardly be surprised that, when they urge the continuance of the present electoral system, their sincerity is questioned. Their record of the past six years, and the seat which remains empty to-day, cause very many to believe that their party do not in fact desire the continuance of the present electoral system, and that they have not abandoned, and have no intention of abandoning, their pursuit of the common roll.
He referred to his refusal to sanction a referendum to test European and Indian opinion as had been suggested by three European members of the Legislative Council: T.W.A. Barker, Major W.E. Willoughby Tottenham and J.P. Bayly. He found this would be futile for three reasons. First, the present Legislative Council with its extended tenure would test opinion. Second, and to quote Fletcher again:

I have explained that there is no longer a European roll, and therefore European wishes cannot be separately ascertained. There is also the point, that, for example, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's stake in the Colony is greater than that of the latest joined mechanic in one of their mills. By counting heads due weight would not be given to the relative importance of various interests. 21

Third, argued Fletcher 'the vast majority of the population had not even an elementary conception of the true nature of the issue'. The importance of pure European opinion and interest was again repeated in the second reason given above. And in a referendum (to be discussed later in the chapter) which had already been conducted by the Municipal Council of Suva, European opinion of the kind that Murchison Fletcher followed had been contradicted. However, he did try to sound local opinion as will be illustrated shortly.

The Fijian chiefs were the first to respond to Fletcher's call. At the very first meeting of the Legislative Council (6 November 1935) after the Governor's Budget Speech the Fijian members tabled a letter on the constitution. They agreed with the sentiments expressed by the Governor. They outlined the reasons for the Cession of Fiji to the British and their fears of Indian domination and democracy. The document elegantly written was essentially the work of the Oxford-educated and Middle Temple lawyer and chief, Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna. It was both an expression of loyalty and faith in the Crown and an unambiguous statement of the Fijian position as seen by the traditional leaders of the indigenous people. For the purpose of this study the following four paragraphs are noteworthy:

After years of Crown Colony government, there is nothing natives desire better than to be governed by the King's Representative with the help and advice of his senior officers and such European members of the Legislative Council as are, as far as possible, above the influences of local interest and

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22 ibid:174-77.
prejudice. This was, we understand, the native attitude in 1903 when the elective system was first introduced. But far-reaching political changes have supervened and the Colony, as we see it, is now threatened with the imminent peril of having in its councils men of low attainments, without instruction in the art of government and without the sense of responsibility that comes from great inherited traditions.

The elective system of 1903 contained within it both elements of weakness and seeds of self-destruction as an enlightened political force. If the European electorate of to-day be analysed, it will be found to consist of three groups. First we have the permanent settlers, a small minority, for Fiji is not a white man's country. Then there is a numerous class composed of people that may be described as those that are here to-day and gone to-morrow. The majority of these two groups come from the neighbouring Dominions of Australia and New Zealand. Thirdly we have persons of European descent. Though permanently settled and deeply concerned in the present and future form of government for this Colony, these people have an education very little higher than our own; and, unfortunately, they lack leaders. Barred socially by the two former groups they are easily carried away by appeals based on equality, whether it be political or social. Being a numerous and, relatively, a rapidly increasing community, the weight of their vote is steadily rising. At no distant date the European electorate will be white only in name, enlightened only in memory.

But from the Indian electorate comes the insistent cry for a wider franchise, for a form of government based on the theory of political equality as between the Indian and European. On the principles of democracy it is impossible to see how the demand can be resisted. For what are the facts? Indians number nearly half the total population of Fiji. They are increasing at a faster rate than any other community. They pay in taxes, in the aggregate, about as much as the Europeans. Their interests in the Colony, already vast, grow apace. Their electorate is larger than the white. Now, here, we have all the factors, all the qualifications, that should, on the popular theory of government, secure for them at least equal representation. And with India, the brightest jewel in the Imperial Crown, a Dominion, with equality a faith, and with the voice of the people regarded as the last word in political wisdom, for how long can a handful of whites justify a system of representation that tried by popular tests must be condemned as being utterly undemocratic? In the development of democracy then lies the danger we must all dread - the predominance of ignorance and prejudice in the councils of the Colony, forces just as nefarious and ruinous whether they be in alliance with Europeans, Indians, or Fijians.

Such are the perils that lie ahead of the elective system and such are the grave dangers that threaten not only our landed interests but also the wider interests of the Europeans. Listening to the democratic clamour of the past months one question repeatedly comes up in our minds, for what did our fathers cede this country? They did so in order to secure for themselves, their people and posterity, a form of government that would ensure peace and happiness, justice and prosperity.
Systems or institutions that fail in human experience to produce these things are not for us. For after all, the moral justification of representative government lies in its power to do good, and to achieve something of this the elements that constitute it must all be present. We have come to the parting of the ways and, looking ahead in the light not only of our own interests but also of those to whom we handed over this country, we choose, with the full support of native conservative and liberal opinion, the system of nomination believing that along this road, and along it alone, the principle of trusteeship for the Fijian race can be preserved and the paramountcy of native interests secured. 23

Earlier in October 1933 in reaction to K.B. Singh's call for equality in treatment for Europeans and non-Europeans Ratu Sukuna had made the comment:

The question of equality has been raised and I should like to say publicly that, so far as Fijians are concerned, we think we are very well treated, and for the next two or three or four generations we look to European leadership and expect the Europeans to lead us, until such times as we are able to guide ourselves. 24

When these words of Sukuna are considered together with the letter of the Fijian chiefs it becomes explicit that their aims did not conflict with those stated by the Governor. Both the pure European minority and Fijian paramountcy could be protected simultaneously. The two had become complementary and this tended to isolate even more Indian opinion that demanded common roll and denounced government control of the municipalities and the reintroduction of the nomination system. It also left on a limb those Europeans like Barker and Bayly who disagreed with Fletcher on the constitutional issue.

Yet the path of the Governor and his supporters did not prove easy. The opposition was equally determined to fight. Though the ordinance to alter the municipal franchise had been passed during the May session, the Mayor, Barker who was also Junior Member for the Southern Division, brought a motion:

That the date for the coming into operation of Ordinance No.15 of 1935 be postponed in order to enable the Mayor to proceed to London early in 1936 for the purpose of placing the views of the Suva Municipal Council personally, before the Secretary of State for the Colonies. 25

24 L.C.Debates 1933:320.
The effort was futile as the Secretary of State had already rejected a request from the Mayor and his Council to delay the implementation of the new ordinance. The debate proved to be a lengthy one. Yet it revealed no new arguments. But it afforded an opportunity for both sides to restate not merely their cases but also to detail the steps each had taken. For Fletcher it afforded the chance to state publicly much of what he had not previously. Especially, it brought into light his crucial role in advising the Secretary of State to assent to the step backwards, from elective franchise to nomination of representatives by a colonial governor. Because the correspondence between the Secretary of State, Passfield and Fletcher on the subject has been discussed at the outset of the previous chapter there is no need to repeat here the belated disclosures of the Governor. Nonetheless certain points need to be made.

Fletcher stated that he had decided that a widening of the municipal franchise would be unacceptable to non-Indians especially as it would ultimately lead to Indian control of Suva. For this Fletcher cannot be damned as the evidence hitherto examined indicates his assessment was correct. But he was incorrect in his assumption 'that the Indians as a whole had no quarrel with the Crown Colony system'. But he was justified in his claims that the Indian community was divided on the franchise question. Nor could anyone argue against the statistics that Fletcher marshalled to illustrate demographic changes in Suva:

At the 31st March, 1932, there were in Suva: Europeans, 1918; Indians, 4,557; Chinese, 311; Half-castes, 939; Fijians, 1,500; Others, 600; total, 9,625, of whom 1,918 were Europeans. In the suburbs there were: Europeans, 700; Indians, 5,500; Chinese, 70; Half-castes, 350; Others, 300; Fijians, 2,000; total, 8,920, of whom 700 were Europeans. Out of a total in Suva and the suburbs of 18,745, 2616 were Europeans. I may note that in 1927, when this question first came into prominence, there were 355 European electors and 22 Indian electors. In 1935 the increase on the European roll has been 16.90 per cent. and the increase on the Indian roll has been 40.4 per cent.

28 ibid:255-265.
29 L.C. Debates 1935:258.
30 L.C. Debates 1935:260. For population changes in Suva 1911-36 also see Appendix III.
When Fletcher's statistics are analysed the number of Indian electors rises from 22 in 1927 to around 89 in 1935 while the European increases approximately by 56 from 355 to 411. One can again concede that Fletcher's fears were long-term and thus perhaps justified. Yet it ought to be noted that he emphasizes the European numbers vis à vis the others. He showed no concern for the fact that after sixty years of British rule there was not a single Fijian elector on the Suva municipal roll. Surely the paramountcy of Fijian interests obliged the Governor to ensure Fijian political advancement? On the municipal issue Fletcher was greatly concerned to protect the European and what he considered the prospects of Indian domination provided him with the pretext:

I do not desire to take control of the Suva Municipal Council. I do not wish to nominate members to the Legislative Council. These irksome responsibilities are not of my choosing. It is patent that a common municipal roll will put the Government of Suva largely into Indian hands. I think we cannot safely entrust to any one of the three communities the task of governing the other two. I believe that the Central Government alone is able to exercise that judicial impartiality without which the holding of the balance even is impossible. I have been afraid - I am afraid - for the very small white minority, lest overwhelming weight of numbers should crush them to the wall. If, when I say farewell to Fiji, I leave that very minority more firmly established - more safe, I shall not have spent myself in vain.

These remarks bear examination for what they reveal. Fletcher linked the Legislative Council and municipal franchise showing that the amendments proposed for both were not isolated issues. Secondly, the fear of Indian control was again there. Thirdly, he spoke of the Government as the only impartial arbitrator in the plural society of Fiji. Fourthly, having made the third point he singled out the European community for special mention. And fifthly the European position was not merely to be preserved but consolidated, i.e. made 'more safe'. If the Government were to be the neutral arbiter then its task was to ensure an equitable treatment.

31 During the debate on the Municipal Institution Amendment Bill on 17 May 1935, Alport Barker (then also Mayor of Suva) commented: 'At present there is not one Fijian ratepayer, or elector, in the town of Suva.' (L.C. Debates 1935:145.)

32 L.C. Debates 1935:264. The underlining is mine in order to add emphasis.
of all ethnic groups, not the perpetuation of the privileged status of the European minority. The racism, implicit and explicit, in Fletcher's motives cannot be denied nor should they be underplayed. They are obvious as much from the publicly stated case of his goals as in his correspondence with Whitehall. Indeed, the principle of the paramountcy of indigenous interests was observed in Fiji perhaps with greater fidelity than elsewhere but this did not mean that the white racism that was part of the European colonial ethos, both in the settlers and many officials, was totally absent from the Fijian scene. Its worst features, as evidenced by the White Highlands of Kenya or the racist practices prevalent in Central Africa were certainly not present but privileges such as the primacy of place for Europeans in the 'natural' order of the social world were conspicuous, some to the last days of British rules.  

The motion to delay the change in the municipal franchise proved of no avail, it was overwhelmingly defeated, only Barker and Bayly voted for it. Even in defeat Barker made two telling points. He contended that people who had 'only small interests in Suva and who ratepayers may have the interests of the town at heart as much as those who hold large interests'. This was a jibe directed at Fletcher's reliance on the merchant-prince

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33 Many examples can be cited. Indians and Fijians were excluded from using the Sea Baths of the town council in Suva till 1956. There were clubs throughout the colony (e.g. Royal Suva Yacht Club, the Fiji Club in Suva, the various planters' clubs in Vanua Levu, the Northern Club in Lautoka) which excluded non-Europeans. The Union Club in Suva in the fifties, the first multi-racial club emerged as a reaction to the above. The Fiji Golf Club which was financed initially through a government loan (in 1936) and other golf clubs excluded non-Europeans till 1961 and even then raised membership dues as a restrictive bar. The Grammar Schools in Suva took only Europeans (and part-Europeans, only a few and very reluctantly). The first non-Europeans were accepted in its sixth form in 1957, thereafter its pupil intake was slowly made non-racial despite opposition though its staff was almost wholly expatriate Europeans (mainly New Zealanders employed under privileged conditions including the payment of New Zealand scale salaries). In the C.S.R. Company compounds and in those of the Emperor Gold Mines in Vatukoula, residential segregation was evident. The European employees (overwhelmingly Australian) of the C.S.R. Company lived in their own social world and objected to 'their Indians' speaking in English to them. The list can be continued.

Hedstrom, wealthy lawyer and property-owner Scott and prosperous businessman Marks. Barker's remarks sprang from his acceptance of the referendum held by his municipal council. There was some conflict over the procedure and in fact the validity of the exercise. The Governor had refused the invitation to appoint official observers. Later he accused the Mayor of failing to inform the ratepayers that the Secretary of State had already assented to the proposals about which they were voting. Fletcher regarded this a crucial factor; the Mayor thought it inconsequential.\textsuperscript{35} The referendum held in Suva on 26 October 1935 resulted as follows:\textsuperscript{36}

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Against Government Control</th>
<th>295</th>
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<td>For Government Control</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Majority against Government Control</td>
<td>231</td>
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There were 570 electors on the Suva municipal roll, 97 of these were absent from the town and 113 did not record their opinion.\textsuperscript{37} Of those who voted 266 were Europeans, 77 Indians, 13 Part-Europeans and 4 Chinese. Even if we assume that all non-Europeans and Part-Europeans voted against Government control, we are still left with 201 Europeans who sided with them. Also over 50\% of those on the roll were against a Government takeover; of those who voted around 80\% fell into this category. The decision made by secret ballot contradicted Fletcher and his friends. Strategically, the referendum had come too late. Besides, it is questionable if the results would have been the same had the ratepayers been asked to choose between government control on the one hand and the existing municipal franchise on a common roll on the other either with the existing literacy test or with one including certain Indian languages. It was the latter which was the crux of the issue at stake.

The defeat of Barker's motion was the death knell of the municipal franchise, which except for the introduction of the stringent literacy test introduced in 1915 and the updating of the Municipal Institutions Ordinance in 1909, had been originally granted in 1877. Those who had fought for its removal saw the battle only half won with

\textsuperscript{35} L.C. Debates 1935:218-227.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid:221.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
its abolition. Immediately they embarked on their next campaign. After the vote on Barker's motion had been taken, Maynard Hedstrom seconded by Henry Scott successfully requested the suspension of the Standing Orders to enable him to begin debate on his motion.\textsuperscript{38}

Hedstrom's motion as he himself stated was in response to that section of the Governor's last budget speech wherein he had spoken of constitutional change.\textsuperscript{39} Hedstrom's motion, seconded by Scott read:

\begin{quote}
That in view of the changed and changing conditions of the Colony the opinion of the unofficial members of this Council is that a system of nominated unofficial representatives will be better suited to the present and future interests of the Colony than the existing system of elected representatives. \textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

The leading speakers were Hedstrom and Scott and they spoke their now familiar pieces, in a lengthy debate full of repetitions of fears of domination and future spectres that would destroy the privileged minority if nomination was not achieved.\textsuperscript{41} Though Fletcher had been an instigator of this backward step, he and his officials did not participate in the debate which was meant to be a test of unofficial opinion.

Hedstrom argued that though the Indian had voiced his repudiation of common roll there was no guarantee that this was a permanent decision. He also thought that most Europeans in any secret ballot would favour the present system but 'an important minority' sought nomination. The majority was being told to bow to the minority; in Hedstrom's terms there was nothing unethical in it. For him too, pure and Part-Europeans were different and he feared the day when Fiji might become like the West Indies, where in certain colonies, no pure white could be found in either the Legislative or Municipal Council. Then came the now familiar equation of European and Fijian interests and the claim that European members had never endeavoured to exploit the Fijian people. His memory was short. Those past speeches of Scott on land and

\textsuperscript{38} The Standing Orders had to be suspended because K.B. Singh had introduced a substantially similar motion barely six months ago in May.

\textsuperscript{39} L.C. Debates 1935:268-269.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid:269.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid:269-312.
segregated residential areas in Suva, Hedstrom's own flirtation with the federation movement and demands for settler rule were all now forgotten. For Hedstrom the Indians were still 'Indian immigrants' but this drew no criticism from K.B. Singh who, unlike most of those whom he claimed to represent, was alien born. Scott, the seconder, was his old self. He was still uncertain whether Indians ought to have been enfranchised in 1929; many of them thought it premature by years.\(^2\) Again Singh and Mudaliar remained silent. Like Hedstrom, Scott deprecated the trend in the West Indies where he believed the Europeans were rueing the day that the elective principle was introduced.\(^3\)

Bayly and Barker stood alone in their opposition to the resolution before the Council. Bayly asked why everyone questioned the sincerity of the Indians in their disavowal of common roll and no one doubted the sincerity of K.B. Singh who had also discarded his past. He accused Ratu Sukuna of living in the past and not doing right by his people. Barker was critical of the references to the Part-Europeans who were inferentially branded as being not European. The fathers of these men had colonized Fiji and now their descendants, through no fault of their own, were being disfranchised. Though Willoughby Tottenham was for nomination he too took umbrage at the remarks made about Part-Europeans.

Of the two Indian members Mudaliar said nothing beyond seconding Singh's amendment. But K.B. Singh was devious. First, he proclaimed himself a firm believer in common roll, in lieu of which he would have nomination. This was excellent strategy. The more he favoured common franchise, the more he supported the case of those who paraded this bogey as the ultimate danger and thereby assured that nomination would come. Yet in one breath he was for common roll, in another he was denouncing democratic institutions and elections as blackmail and sham.\(^4\) Here was inconsistency par excellence and it exposed Singh as a self-seeker interested only in ascertaining a future seat for himself in the Council.

The outcome of the debate was a foregone conclusion; apart from Barker and Bayly, the three Fijians, the two Indians, and four

\(^2\) ibid:274-275.
\(^3\) ibid:277.
\(^4\) ibid:300-301.
Europeans supported the motion. The Governor could once more inform the Secretary of State that the elected representatives of the people had agreed to their own liquidation.

Having obtained the view of the elected representatives the Governor set out to test opinion outside the Council. The District Commissioners were asked to sound feeling in their areas. Also the Government asked prominent institutions for their attitudes. This information was sent to the Secretary of State.

The investigations of the various District Commissioners through interviews with available voters revealed that Europeans were overwhelmingly in favour of the nomination system because they feared other alternatives would lead to Indian domination. Among the Indians opinion was divided though a majority favoured the retention of the elective principle with the hope of common roll in the future. Minority groups such as Muslims and the Madrasis preferred nomination as a protection against the Hindu majority.

The two commercial banks (New South Wales and New Zealand) strongly advocated the nomination system as did the newly established gold mining company at Vatukoula and Burns Philp (South Seas Company Ltd.). The C.S.R. Company informed the Governor that its Board of Directors had come to the conclusion that Fiji would be best served by a nomination system having 6 European members and 3 Indians and 3 Fijians. It would not concede equal representation between black and white races. Its argument was that Fiji's development, past, present and future, was dependent upon European capital and guidance for economic survival.

The Christian missions, Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic all advised nomination and government control as a guarantee for progress and against the possibility of Indian domination.

The opponents of Fletcher and his supporters were no less active. Both the Fiji Times owned and edited by the Hon. T.W.A. Barker and the Fiji Samachar, mouthpiece of Vishnu Deo and the Arya Samajis, during the year published editorials and correspondence and reported every meeting opposing nomination. There were many public meetings

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45 C.A.9/45.
46 C.A.9/46.
47 C.A.9/47.
and numerous petitions against nomination. Though it will serve no purpose here to examine each one as some have already been discussed in the previous chapter certain points ought to be made. First, too much emphasis must not be put on petitions as sometimes individuals attached their signature to what they did not fully comprehend or did so to get rid of a persistent pleader. Second, mention must be made of a meeting in Suva in May 1935, where Europeans rejected nomination by 65 to 35 votes and denied that the existing communal franchise was either democratic or likely to lead to Indian domination in the near future. The Muslims seemed the only group totally in support of nomination. The South Indians, Mudaliar's own community, were divided though the majority were not with him. The Indians were strongly against nomination and Singh and Mudaliar were thoroughly incorrect in their assessment of their own electorate. These expressions of attitude did not vary to any significant degree from those canvassed by the Government.

The Government of India as was its habit submitted its views. Neither was this a novel step nor was this a practice that India followed as regards Fiji alone, it did likewise with Indian problems in Kenya. As earlier, the Government of India expressed grave concern with the proposed changes. Fletcher replied that the Government of India had been purposely misled about true Indian opinion in Fiji by Vishnu Deo. India strongly opposed the constitutional amendments advocated by Fletcher. The Indian Council of State resolved unanimously to convey to Westminster its repudiation of the Governor's proposal as retrogressive. Though these protests did not deter Fletcher they might have had a useful impact in the Colonial Office in that they added to the weight of opposition against Fletcher. They were ineffectual as far as the

50 F.T.29 May 1935.
53 Fletcher to C.O.Conf. 13 Jan.1936.
54 Encl. C.O. to Fletcher, Conf. 8 Apr.1936.
55 Encl. C.O. to Fletcher, Conf. 15 July 1936.
municipal franchise was concerned for this had already been abolished but they were not wholly worthless in the case of the Legislative Council constitution for Whitehall had not given its final judgement.

For the Secretary of State the task was not easy. But distant from the Colony and unaffected by the emotions prevailing there, he was able to see the issues in better perspective. He recognized the considerable division of opinion concerning the abandonment of the elective principle and the wide measure of agreement on equal representation. If the subject had been referred to the electorate the contest would have been bitter, and the result might not have been conclusive. Thus he could not sanction a referendum. In the interests of the Colony he decided that a compromise would be best. It was important that he recognize Fijian opinion which did not wish for direct elections; Fijian representatives would continue to be chosen, as previously, by the Governor from a panel of names submitted to him by the Council of Chiefs. Within the Indian and European communities there was division; hence he had decided that each of them should elect 3 representatives and 2 would be nominated by the Governor. Sectional interests would thus be protected. The Part-European problem could be dealt by tightening the definition of a European elector, and any suggestion on this count would be considered sympathetically by him, but he would bear in mind those already enfranchised. Finally, the existing council was extended till the end of 1936 or any other date not later than 1937.

In Fiji, the action was taken for what it was, a compromise, though the Fiji Samachar still branded it as a case of divide and rule. For the advocates of the elective principle the Secretary of State had retrieved an almost lost cause. At the same time he could not fully oblige them because this would have implied a condemnation of his own representative.

57 F.T. 21 July 1936; Shanti Dutt 25 July 1936; Fiji Samachar 25 July 1936.
THE step backwards in constitutional change discussed in this and the previous chapter arose from fears of Indian domination and the danger it posed both for the European position and the doctrine of the paramountcy of Fijian interests. To advance this as an explanation is to fail to fathom the anxiety of non-Indians and the rulers. There is need to explain why Indian domination appeared a probability. The answer lies in the demographic and economic changes which began in the nineteen twenties and appeared to be reaching a climax in the thirties.

The most salient feature in population growth in Fiji in the twentieth century was the numerical increase of the Indian community. During the 1881-1936 period the Indian proportion in the colony's population increased from 0.46% to 4.28% and thereafter the trend continued until in the nineteen forties Indians became the dominant component and later numerically greater than all others taken together. The numerical upsurge of the Indian was a cause of consternation particularly for the indigenes who by 1936 constituted 49.22% of the total population, a considerable decline from the 90.10% of 1881. The 1921 Census had shown that while the Fijian birth-rate was 32.10 per 1000 that of the Indians had reached 38.00. Thereafter Indians maintained their high birth-rate and though the Fijian one improved it did not offset the advantage the Indians had gained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRUDE BIRTH RATE PER THOUSAND</th>
<th>FIJIAN</th>
<th>INDIAN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>34.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>31.91</td>
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<td>1930</td>
<td>36.43</td>
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<td>1931</td>
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<td>1937</td>
<td>34.46</td>
<td>37.58</td>
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<td>1938</td>
<td>37.63</td>
<td>39.52</td>
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(Source: Reports of Secretary for Fijian Affairs (1929-1939) and Reports of Secretary for Indian Affairs (1929-1938).

Further the Indian death rate was considerably lower than that of the Fijians as the following table amply illustrates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEATH RATE PER THOUSAND</th>
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<tr>
<td>FIJIAN</td>
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<td>1928</td>
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<td>1938</td>
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(Source: as for the previous table.)

Infant mortality which posed a considerable problem for Fijian society was again comparatively low among the Indians. The Indian population was also augmented by migration from India. And an increasing proportion of the Indian population was Fiji-born which meant that more and more Indians were going to regard Fiji their native land where they found a place in the sun for themselves. The implications for the Fijians were clear, though they were the indigenes they were no longer the only ethnic group for whose benefit the natural resources of their original homeland would be utilized. Admittedly this situation had been altered prior to the arrival of the Indians with the influx earlier of Europeans but these always remained a small minority when compared to the Fijians. By the beginning of the nineteen thirties Fiji had been transformed into a multicultural colony where even if the interests of the indigenes remained paramount they had to share what they might have a century before cherished as only their patrimony. Having thus relinquished some

59 The Secretary for Native Affairs in his report for 1935 (C.P.34/36) gave the following figures as percentages of deaths of Fijian children under one year of age for the years 1930-1935: 1930, 18.64%; 1931, 11.33%; 1932, 10.00%; 1933, 9.78%; 1934, 12.64%; 1935, 12.65%. In 1935 the Indian infant mortality under 5 years of age was 8.30% of live births and 10.15% in 1934. (C.P.16/36 and 24/35.)

60 See Appendix II (c).
of Indians and Fijis, were concerned in their own making the Fijians could not afford to lose ground in situations which might lead to their becoming isolated, unbalanced. And any capitulation to Indian political demands was equivalent to this light of loss. The Indians were a fighting race, accustomed to an existence which prescribed one man, one vote, one voice. Indian in those parts of the largest numbers stood to gain most. In the fight of these parts, the most obvious base for identity and an evolving factor was race. America at one future date would lead to political power being deposited into Indian hands. The vulnerability was not precluded even by the divisions among the Indians on political issues.

British policy tended to be motivated internests which could ensure a static balance between the Indians and the British in the situation of the distribution of political power opposed to that of Fijians. The political philosophy arose in the context of political power their stand was a political philosophy which could not ensure a political status. Their demands and political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. Their political status. 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Already resentful at the British policy, the process of capital was unprepared to display political loyalty and would be important to political suicide. They had no more a financial stake in Fiji to allow it to be jeopardized by the Britishhood of an Indian take-over.

55 For figures on European population see Appendix II.
The manner in which the Indians had extended and diversified their original economic role in Fiji is evident from a comparison of statistics on occupations of the various races in the years 1911, 1921 and 1936 as summarized in Appendix V. Yet certain features require emphasis here. First the Indians had come as agricultural labourers and quickly moved not only into commerce but become small planters.\(^\text{62}\) By 1911 there were already 530 unindentured Indians involved in commerce compared to 511 Europeans, in 1921 the numbers had risen 85\(^\text{63}\) and 513 respectively and in 1936, 1,011 and 202. In agriculture too the European position had progressively weakened.\(^\text{64}\) The labour shortages from 1917 onwards, followed by industrial disputes in 1920 and 1921 as well as the slump in the world price in sugar in 1922 meant the end of the plantation era in the sugar industry and 'within a few years most of the large sugar estates had been cut up into small holdings'.\(^\text{65}\) Similar problems 'caused the failure of rubber estates in south Viti Levu while storm damage and high production costs hit cocoa and tea estates'.\(^\text{66}\) The banana industry fared no better: 'war conditions curtailed shipping, and exports fell off; and when in 1921, Australia imposed a protective tariff, the industry received a blow from which it has not since recovered'.\(^\text{67}\) The period after 1920 was characterized by 'the withdrawal of Europeans from active farming except for coconut growing and dairying'.\(^\text{68}\) Again it was the Indians who bridged the gap caused by European withdrawal. And in sugar cane cultivation the Indian farmers were aided by the introduction and implementation in the nineteen twenties of the 'small-peasant-farmer scheme' of the C.S.R.Company which leased land to Indians and bought their cane. In fact in 1921 the Fiji

\(^{62}\text{C.S.O.1731/1887, 333/97, 1730/99; C.P.22/97.}\)

\(^{63}\text{Census Reports. See summary in Appendix III. In 1936 the category was designated 'Commerce and Finance'.}\)

\(^{64}\text{See Preface pp.3-4.}\)

\(^{65}\text{Derrick 1965:135.}\)

\(^{66}\text{Ward 1963:33.}\)

\(^{67}\text{Derrick 1965:171.}\)

\(^{68}\text{Ward 1963:35.}\)
Government was of the opinion the C.S.R. Company desired the elimination of the European planter so that it could purchase cane exclusively from the Indians at cheaper rates.  

While the economy of Fiji was experiencing these changes it was drawn into that catastrophe, the world depression which began in 1929 and continued into the early thirties. These years might be generalized by the comment that 'in Fiji throughout the thirties times were hard and living standards low'. Again it was the Europeans who were hit the hardest. As those who monopolized Fiji's export trade they reaped the ill-harvest of the rest of the commercial world; their businesses were unlike the small Indian concerns run largely by an extended family system with employees who were kinsmen. Also again the European planters found themselves facing ruin, and in the Legislative Council the future of the copra industry was discussed with gloom even when the worst effects of the depression seemed declining. 

In her reminiscences Lema Low, *A Family in Fiji* (1962) has shown the difficulties that faced European copra planters in this period. The Fijians for whom copra was the chief money earner and who had even greater involvement in it than the Europeans found their meagre financial resources rapidly diminishing. In 1934 the copra prices opened with £10 per ton and during the year fell to £8. 

In the banana industry the Fijians were saved by the introduction of a quota system in 1933 otherwise their position might have been eroded by Chinese participation. Though the Fijians' purchasing power was greatly reduced they could rely on their communal system to insulate them from the worst impact of the depression - their communal gardens provided them with food and their village with shelter. Besides their wants were fewer than those of the Europeans.

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69 Rodwell to C.O. Conf. 19 Apr. 1921; Fell to C.O. Conf. 14 Nov. 1921.
70 Dixon 1956:57.
71 L.C. Debates 1934:88 and 95.
72 The floods and hurricane of 1929 had severely damaged the two main commercial products of the Fijians: coconuts and bananas. (C.P.37/31.) A similar disaster in 1931 again caused extensive havoc to Fijian villages and plantations. (C.P.15/32.)
73 C.P.17/34.
74 C.P.17/34.
Consequently the Europeans suffered more than the Fijians. Derrick makes the point well:

When, in 1938 the price of copra dropped to £5.5.6 a ton, plantations employing paid labour could not afford as much as to collect the fallen nuts, while at the same time Fijian growers were able to make copra with a margin of profit. 75

While the Fijians and Europeans were disadvantaged and distressed the Indians with their involvement in the sugar industry under the aegis of the resourceful C.S.R. Company appeared secure. 76 The contrast was not overlooked. Officials frequently referred to the prosperity of Indians in Fiji and how they were much better off than they would have been in India. Fletcher contended that Indians remained in Fiji because of the rich material rewards that colony offered, otherwise they would leave. 77 Some years earlier to illustrate that their situation in Fiji was better than that in India, Fletcher had stated that in Fiji 5.63% of the Indians were at school compared with only 3.47% in India. 78 Later in that year (1930) Fletcher pointed out that during the previous five years 1,627 Indian adults had been repatriated and these on an average left Fiji with £12 each while during the same period all the other colonies repatriated 7,359 adults who on an average left for India with £16. 79

According to A.A. Wright, who acted as Governor during Fletcher's absence from the colony in the early part of 1935 and was a strong advocate of the nomination system, the Indians were the 'most prosperous community in Fiji'. 80

During a debate on the depressed state of the copra industry Sukuna spoke:

Fijians, as a whole would support any measure the Government proposes to palliate, ease, or relieve, the position of the European planter. It is not entirely sentiment; for that class in the past has been of great benefit to us. We have drawn

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75 Derrick 1965:166.
76 L.C. Debates 1934:268. In a letter to the Governor Scott and Hedstrom wrote that the only fortunate people in Fiji at the time were those in the sugar industry and those employed by the Government.
79 L.C. Debates 1930:143. Fletcher added that Indians in Fiji had 'the habit of remitting considerable sums to India'.
80 L.C. Debates 1934:369. When Wright made these remarks he was the Acting Colonial Secretary.
thousands and thousands from them. We are still drawing thousands of pounds in the form of wages. If this class goes to the wall, we feel that we stand to lose. If the estates are lost to them, they may get into hands from which we cannot expect the same treatment in the future. 81

The Secretary for Native Affairs (A.A. Wright) added that though he had not mentioned them by name, Sukuna was fearful of Europeans falling into Indian hands.82 Once more Sukuna had aligned himself and his people on the side of the Europeans in a situation where he considered threats of an Indian take-over existed. There was also the sentiment that the Indians were contributing less in taxation than others. The Acting Secretary for Fijian Affairs (H.C. Monckton) told the Legislative Council:

Sir, the native Fijian pays a good deal more in direct tax than other members of the population, particularly the Indians. The Fijian pays £1 Government tax; he also pays a Provincial Rate from 11s. to 23s. That means that he pays 31s to 43s in direct taxation. In addition to that, in the case of a Fijian who has left his town for more than twelve months, he pays Absentee Tax of £1. He is really heavily taxed in proportion to his ability to pay when he pays up to £3.3.0. Sir, I would call attention to the preference to the Indian, who pays only £1 when the Fijian pays approximately £3. 83

Among non-Indians in Fiji there was a consensus of opinion that the Indians were a thriving community not in want and in an environment far more conducive to success than any they would have encountered had they remained in India. Hence others found it difficult to understand why the Indians ought to complain so much and make such excessive demands as the common roll.84 There was some truth

81 L.C. Debates 1934:93.
82 ibid:94.
83 L.C. Debates 1935:199. K.B. Singh during the same debate was to express his disagreement with the contention because he thought that Indians did not get the same treatment as Fijians. He called on the council to refrain from drawing comparisons between Indians and Fijians or Indians and Europeans. (ibid:201.)
84 Fletcher very early in his governorship had made explicit that common roll did not exist in India. In his address to the Council (13 May 1930) he stated that a perusal of the Indian Year Book for 1929 showed that in the sub-continent electorates were arranged largely on the basis of giving separate representation 'to various races, communities, and separate interests' in the diverse Indian population. Thus in Bengal there were 7 divisions: Non-Muslim, Muslim, European, Anglo-Indian, Landholders, University and Commerce. (L.C. Debates 1930: 8.)
truth in the assertion that Indians in Fiji had opportunities for material advancement that they might not have had in India. But wealth was concentrated in the hands of only a few while the bulk of the population as the Government itself knew had to contend with difficulties such as indebtedness, short-term leases with the constant uncertainty about their renewal, the need for more land and better educational facilities. On the issue of land, the Fijians were willing to lease it provided their future needs were adequately safeguarded. The frequent point at issue was the length of leases; Indians wanted 99 year leases while legislation in Fiji provided 21 year leases with possible extensions of 10 years. Yet despite these difficulties the Indians as a whole were not in material want or plagued by dire poverty; they had no cause to despair. Nonetheless they were bedevilled by a sense of insecurity which they thought could only be removed by the arrival of common roll and the provision of social and political equality with Europeans. The medicine that the majority of the Indians demanded as the panacea, was anathema to others.

Thus persistent Indian political agitation for common roll aroused strong reactions in the others. For the Fijians and their British guardians it spelled the doom of the principle of the paramountcy of Fijian interests. For the Europeans it implied economic danger, the end of political influence, the invasion of their social privileges. Under these circumstances those who felt threatened found it necessary to seek protective devices even if they were retrogressive and meant steps backwards rather than a march forwards towards political development. Moreover the abolition of the municipal franchise and the re-introduction of the nomination system alongside communal elections for the Legislative Council were the safety measures so chosen.

Yet Europeans had sought protection not from Indians only. They had expressed fears of Part-European domination of their electorates. The Part-Europeans were the children of marriages and liaisons between

European males and native women and tried to emphasize more their European connection than their non-European links. Yet the Europeans were wary of them. When they were enfranchised in 1910 it was the intention to 'lift them to the level of the white man'. Thereafter they became the forgotten men politically for the next two decades.

Then in 1931 the Part-European population showed an increase of 113 while the European population fell by 20; the next year the former again rose by 102 (+2.9%) while the latter declined by 195 (-3.8%). In fact in that year (1932) the European had shown a natural increase of 45; their decline was due to emigration caused by the difficult economic conditions. The European population was to continue to decline until 1935 when it registered a growth of 3.67% to the Part-European's 3.47%. During these years, however, the Part-European population continued to grow; and its crude birth-rate from 1928 to 1938 was always at least double that of the Europeans - its highest point was 1931, when it registered 43.82 per thousand to the Europeans' 17.20. In 1934 both reached their lowest point for the decade, the European births were 8.82 per thousand while that of the Part-Europeans was 24.21. Despite the decline the latter still registered nearly three times as many births.

\[86\] L.C. Debates 1910, First Session: 29.
\[87\] C.P.HO/33.
\[88\] ibid.
\[89\] ibid.
ESTIMATED POPULATION 1928-37.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Part-Europeans</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>3,158</td>
<td>4,458</td>
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<td>3,281</td>
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<td>4,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>3,717</td>
<td>4,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>3,846</td>
<td>4,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>4,646</td>
<td>4,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>4,756</td>
<td>4,238</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Medical Department Reports 1929-1938.)

PERCENTAGE INCREASE (+) or DECREASE (-) 1929-37

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Part-Europeans</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>+6.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>+1.50</td>
<td>+7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>+3.39</td>
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<td>-15.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>+2.37</td>
<td>+1.90</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Calculations based on previous table.)

For some time, Europeans such as Scott and Hedstrom had been worried that pure whites would be outnumbered by the Part-Europeans and when the Medical and Health Report for 1934 revealed that the Part-Europeans had increased 15.29 per thousand to the Europeans' 1.87, the latter became even more concerned. 90

Scott, Hedstrom and Fletcher found it imperative that the nomination system should be introduced lest the Part-Europeans swamp the European electorates and control the voting therein. 91 Those European leaders who felt anxious were able to convince the Governor that their position and interests in Fiji could only be safeguarded

90 C.S.O. F38/24.

91 C.A.9/91. For Fletcher's comments on the issue see pp.252-53.
by the nomination system and they obtained substantially what they sought. Unfortunately the Governor did not see fit to recognize the Part-Europeans as also having distinct grievances and phobias that needed attention. To some degree the Part-Europeans themselves were in error, they were far too intent on achieving assimilation with and integration into European society. Otherwise, like the Muslims, they might have been able by pressure to obtain a seat for one of their own group as a nominated member in the new Legislative Council in 1937.

Europeans, or at least the more influential among them, wanted neither loss of their identity nor diminution of their political influence by incursions from Part-Europeans. Even after the Secretary of State had decided not to abolish the elective principle in the Legislative Council, Europeans continued the demands for greater protection from Part-Europeans. Pressure was exerted to tighten the definition of a European. But the Executive Council resolved that there ought to be no re-definition of 'European Elector' in the Letters Patent, merely a more precise implementation of the existing one. There was the view held by some officials that the Part-European 'menace' was grossly exaggerated. And this was borne out by the number of elected voters of the two groups in question. Even after the constitution had been changed in 1937 some European politicians remained dissatisfied but Sir Arthur Richards made it explicit to the Secretary of State that their wishes deserved no consideration. The Secretary of State fully concurred that the facts did not indicate the need or desirability of any action either...

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92 C.O. to Fletcher 149, 20 July 1936; C.S.O. F38/22/1.
95 See Appendix IV.
96 Richards to C.O.Conf. 5 Nov. 1937; C.S.O.GF38/25: 'It is ... clear that the immediate danger of the European Divisions being entirely controlled by the half-caste vote has been greatly exaggerated. In addition the fear of the half-caste vote is based on another fallacy - that it is or ever could be homogeneous. There is no likelihood whatever of the half-caste vote being cast as such on one side or another and I cannot visualize a good European candidate not obtaining a fair proportion of half-caste votes even against a half-caste opponent. If a good half-caste candidate emerged he would have a fair
to exclude the Part-European vote or to extend European franchise.97

The attempt to raise the Part-European bogey was an illustration of the racist attitudes of a section of the European community. There was no other reason why the Part-Europeans should be dragged in as a pretext for constitutional change.98 They were a small group, neither wealthy nor politically vocal but they were feared by some Europeans simply because their numbers might someday enable them to elect one of their own and thus deprive some pure European of a seat in the Legislative Council. By colluding with Europeans of this view on the subject Fletcher was as guilty as they were of racial prejudice. The Part-Europeans could not be said to threaten the principle of the paramountcy of Fijian interests as the Indian advocates of common roll did.

The Part-European episode is significant in that it reveals that the step backwards was not recommended purely for motives of high principle of safeguarding the Fijian people. Fortunately the Secretary of State had wisdom enough to assess the circumstances prevailing in Fiji for himself. Thus he did not succumb to the pressures calling for the total abolition of the elective principle in Fiji. Though he re-introduced the nomination system he did so without rescinding the right to vote for one's representatives in the Legislative Council. His compromise placated anxious minorities as well as saved Fiji from being plunged into constitutional darkness.

96 cont'd: chance of success in the Eastern Division only and I cannot personally feel that it would be a bad thing for one Division to be represented by a half-caste of suitable education and ability. There is not one at present in sight.' When Richards wrote this despatch he was aware from the Medical Report for 1936 (C.P.27/37) that during that year the Part-European population had increased by 20.51% (4,616) while the European one had declined by 15.72% to 4,159. The difference between the two totals here and those of the Census Report of 1936 is due to the Medical Report figures being estimates.
97 C.O. to Richards, Conf. 31 Dec. 1937.
98 Two European Legislative Council members, Barker and Major Willoughby Tottenham strongly deprecated the manner in which the Part-Europeans had been mentioned by the Governor in his Address. (L.C.Debates 1935:290-and 291.) Willoughby Tottenham, unlike Barker, however, favoured the nomination system because of the Indian danger although initially he had opposed the idea.
X

CONCLUSION

THE period 1900-37 in Fiji witnessed both constitutional progress and retrogression. There was progress in that the franchise was introduced in 1904 for the European settlers and extended to the Indians in 1929, while for the Fijians the Council of Chiefs was permitted to nominate representatives to the Legislative Council. There was retrogression in that the municipal franchise was restricted for racial reasons in 1915 by a severe education test and then in 1937 finally abolished and replaced wholly by the nomination system. In the Legislative Council too the elective principle was diluted when partial nomination on the basis of ethnic groups was re-introduced in 1937 to exist alongside communal elections. These arrangements were the outcome of the dilemma that confronted the colonial regime in its efforts to remain true to its obligations to the Fijian people on the one hand and to accommodate the demands of reactionary Europeans and assertive Indians on the other.

Constitutional advance owed its origin to the pressures exerted by European settlers who sought for Fiji British representative institutions to which they considered themselves rightful heirs. But Britain having undertaken to safeguard the rights of the Fijian people found itself unable to grant its sons in Fiji the political forms they enjoyed in Australia and New Zealand. It was unwilling to cede its responsibilities in Fiji to a minority settler regime. And the communal franchise of 1904 was thus a compromise between British obligations and settler demands.

Though they accepted this constitutional concession the Europeans refused to admit at that stage that their hopes of turning Fiji into a white colony were in vain. Consequently they proceeded to consolidate their political status: they obtained representation on the Executive Council in 1912; through persistent and concerted pressure they guaranteed their grip on the municipalities of Cava and Levuka by the introduction of a rigid literacy qualification into the municipal franchise in 1915. But by 1917, the more perceptive among the European leaders abandoned their quest for democracy in Fiji
when they realized the dangers of such a system for themselves, a tiny minority amidst a non-European majority. They were particularly concerned about rapid increases in the Indian population and its clamour for social and political equality with them. Current racial doctrines of the Europeans made this request distasteful enough but they sensed graver consequences. In their path to improvement Indians had been invading European economic preserves and providing successful competition therein, if their political ambitions were not checked then European influence in Fiji could be reduced to minimal significance and finally eliminated. European capital and sacrifice in the pioneering days had helped to develop Fiji and they saw no reason why they should be supplanted in the country that was rightfully their home by their erstwhile servants. While earlier Europeans had chafed against the autocracy of colonial Governors and their policy of paramountcy of Fijian interests, they now found it convenient and imperative for survival to discard opposition and seek an alliance with the colonial regime. Since they were British they could state that they too were legatees to whom the Fijians had entrusted their country. Once they had abandoned their former political aspirations and accepted the crown colony system they could successfully forge an entente with the Government. Once they equated their interests with those of the regime established to protect the future of the Fijians their own position would become unassailable. Together they would withstand the Indian onslaught. Such rationalization enabled Scott, Hedstrom and their colleagues to co-operate with Governors such as Sweet-Escott and Murchison Fletcher. They were aided by the Fijians' willingness to accept them as their benefactors.

Enjoying economic progress and deciding to make Fiji their new homeland and that of their descendants, the Indians sought political equality. On their petition they were granted a nominated representative in 1916 but they were not overwhelmingly happy with the choice of Badri Mahraj. In order to ensure a regular labour supply from India, the Government was prepared to bestow communal franchise upon the Indians. But the issue was fraught with problems and it was not till 1929 that it became a reality. One of the major causes of the delay had been the attitude of the Government of India to
whose insistence on a common franchise neither the Fiji Government nor the Colonial Office was prepared to bend.

The entry of the three Indian representatives into the Legislative Council brought controversy. They asked lengthy and detailed questions aimed at highlighting Indian grievances (as conceived by the community) and embarrassing the Government. The climax came with the introduction of the Indian motion calling for common roll, its unanimous rejection by the official, Fijian, and European members, followed by the withdrawal and resignation of the three Indian councillors. Thereafter the Indians remained unrepresented till 1932. In their behaviour they had obtained inspiration from compatriots in a similar position in Kenya and were encouraged by Gandhi. The consequences were threefold. Firstly, the Indian community became politically divided into those wishing to utilize the new-found franchise and those who preferred boycott or non-cooperation. Secondly, the Indian community, particularly the non-cooperationsists were ranged against the other ethnic groups. Thirdly, Indian agitation and intransigence provoked a protective reaction in the other racial camps which brought about major and retrogressive constitutional changes in 1937.

Since the Indian seats in the Legislative Council remained vacant till 1932 one might argue that the Indian community supported non-cooperation in order to obtain common roll. Why were the Indians so single-minded and stubborn in their request, especially when they might have exploited their enfranchisement by seeking redress of their more practical problems such as land by obtaining the sympathy and assistance of other groups? The answer lies in the Indians' feeling that first and foremost they must obtain equality as a matter of their izzat or self-respect. They considered communal franchise a stigma of inferiority. Their obsession with equality blinded them to all else. In the pursuit of their own goals they chose to ignore the regime's obligations to the Fijian people. Indians saw common roll as the only guarantee of the security they so desperately sought.

Encouragement from India increased the Fiji Indians' stubbornness; in the past, India's intervention had achieved the abolition of the indenture system, further pressure had resulted in the enfranchisement of Indians in Fiji; it had acted continually as a vocal watchdog over
the plight of Indians abroad. By listening to India, especially to its nationalist politicians, Fijian Indians hoped to obtain redress. Besides, India was still bharat mata (Mother India) even though Fiji had become the new home where a permanent place in the sun was desired. Fijian Indians viewed India as New Zealanders and Australians until quite recently regarded England as witness their frequent references to 'home' or 'the old country' or 'mother country'. India was the source of the Fijian Indians' culture, the land of their gods, the soil of their spiritual sustenance. Those that came out of there, especially the educated ones, were accorded adulation. This is what made Indians look with awe upon Manilal, Sri Krishna, Basist Muni, S.B.Patel, A.D.Patel, K.B.Singh as well as the Hasan brothers and earlier Mirza Muzzaffar Beg among the Muslims. The same sentiment of faith and trust had in 1922 led the Indians to open their hearts to Raju and his colleagues. Even C.F.Andrews, a European, had won their confidence because of his links with India. Because India had been sympathetic, Fijian Indian politicians were susceptible to direction from there. The frequent invocation of India's aid and that country's readiness to interfere undermined rather than strengthened the Indian cause in Fiji. Other groups had no such outside supporters and resented this advantage of their Indian counterparts. Besides, India was during those years in the throes of rampant nationalism which threatened the Empire, and to those who placed their faith in the imperial mission of the British race Gandhi and his fellows were intolerable upstarts and rebels, dissident malcontents fomenting mischief. The Government, Europeans and Fijian leaders thus viewed supplication to India with grave mistrust.

Not all Indians appealed to India. Those who did were usually Arya Samajis led by Vishnu Deo. Some preferred co-operation with the government or opposition through constitutional means through elections and entry into the Legislative Council. Judging from the repeated victory of the Arya Samaji group at the elections, the co-operationists were either in a minority or were not as well-organized as their opponents of if they were in a majority political apathy negated their numerical strength. One group among them were the Muslims who, as in India at the time and no doubt in emulation, appealed for separate
representation. Others included Indian Christians like John Grant and John Bairagi who, because they had abandoned their ancestral religion and acquired another offered by the European missionaries, often found themselves cut off from their fellow Indians. Indian Christians, moreover, tended to be more desirous of equating themselves with European ways and mode of living. Like the Muslims, they found Arya Samaji tactics futile.

There were others who preferred co-operation with the Government and Europeans because it was profitable. The Government might appoint one to an advisory board where one came into contact with Europeans, who, if impressed, might assist in obtaining business contracts or land or jobs for sons or help in some other way whereby an ambitious individual hoped to gain wealth or stature. Just as some Indians hoped to advance their own leadership claims by creating agitating factions so did some others wish to obtain personal gain through co-operation.

But the faction most articulate and best organized was the Arya Samaj and its political supporters. And these followed the Indian campaign for the franchise in Kenya as closely as the news sources in Fiji permitted. Indians in Fiji like Indians in Kenya used tactics of non-cooperation popular with nationalists of the Gandhian school in India. However, European settlers and officials also watched events in Kenya closely for they too were concerned lest the Colonial Office succumb to Indian pressure there and then do likewise in Fiji. They too were sensitive to trends in the Empire at large. Thus Rodwell was quick to draw a comparison between Indians in Kenya and Fiji in his successful efforts to veto the representation of the latter on the Executive Council. He contended that the possible inclusion of an Indian in the Kenyan Executive Council was no argument for the imposition of the same concession in Fiji:

The Indian in Fiji is mainly of the coolie class. The Kenya Indian, I believe, is of a much higher class both socially and educationally and therefore better qualified for participation in the inner councils of the government.

1 This comment on Indian Christians is based on discussions with Fiji Indians, both Christian and non-Christian.
2 Based on oral evidence.
3 Rodwell to C.O.Conf. 18 Apr.1922.
Since precedents in one part of the Empire could be used elsewhere it was important for all concerned to take note of political problems in other colonies especially if they seemed relevant.

Of the two major antagonists, Europeans and Indians, in the contest for constitutional rights in Fiji, it can be said that both exhibited similarities with counterparts abroad. For the Indians (as stated earlier) it was not just the franchise it was an issue of izzat and race equality in the Empire as emphasized by Indians at the Imperial Conference in London in 1921 and again in 1923. For the Europeans, Indians in the various parts of the Empire were becoming a threat and had to be warded off. Professor Hancock's description of the South African situation can be equated with Fiji:

There was too big a crowd of Indians jostling for places on the lower ranks of the economic ladder. The white settlers believed that the Indians, in their struggle to ascend, would thrust their way into positions which should be reserved for Europeans. For the Indians had a far less expensive standard of living than the Europeans, and therefore a greater power to thrust and cling. And what would be the fate of the unfortunates who were pushed from their foothold? A dominant race which had built its homes precariously on the broken ground of African society could not even ask such a question without feeling a shiver of panic.

The only difference was that the Europeans in Fiji had not been able to acquire the position of dominance they had achieved in South Africa and Rhodesia and to a lesser degree in Kenya, but Fiji Europeans felt the same 'shiver of panic' when confronted by Indian economic improvement and political claims.

In Fiji, the Europeans viewed the Indians, in the nineteen twenties and thirties, with the same sense of threat that they had earlier regarded the policy of the paramountcy of Fijian interests as expounded

4 Hancock 1937:186-87.

5 ibid:190-191. The same can be said about the Kenya Europeans. This is illustrated by Gregory 1971:494. 'The Kenya Europeans feared, with considerable justification, that political concessions would lead to proportional representation through which the Indians, by weight of number, would control the Government in the same way that they dominated business and commerce. Many were obsessed with the dangers of the 'Indian menace'.'
and implemented by Gordon and his successors. Both imposed restraints on settler aspirations. It was the paramountcy of Fijians interests that had denied them of an endless supply of cheap land and the abundant availability of indigenous labourers. It had, moreover, thwarted them from obtaining the political institutions which in neighbouring New Zealand and Australia established the primacy of European interests over those of the indigenes. As a result European settlers in Fiji found themselves under many constraints not imposed on their counterparts in other parts of the British Empire. Having conceded to these restrictions, although with opposition, they found themselves menaced by the Indians who coupled economic diversification and versatility with calls for a type of political reform that would put power into their hands. The former servants and their descendants were clamouring for concessions which in their state of illiteracy and inexperience they lacked the ability to manage. Besides, the wielding of political power in Fiji was a British prerogative not to be surrendered to lesser men. For their part, the Indians saw the Europeans as obstacles to the achievement of what they considered their promised rights: political parity, social equality and economic progress without restraints. Their inability to obtain these they blamed on a collusion between European settlers and a European regime. They saw themselves deprived solely for racist reasons. And in their determination they ignored the paramountcy of Fijian interests as the Europeans themselves had earlier ignored it. Out of this European fear and Indian assertion the political conflict which developed and has been examined in previous chapters may be termed a struggle for political ascendancy between Indians and Europeans. It was in this contest that the colonial regime had to adjudicate.

Yet there was an important difference in the external influence for the Europeans and Indians. The Europeans were staunch defenders of Empire and colonialism. The Indians, particularly in India were its critics and opponents. The nationalists in India epitomised forces seeking the dismemberment of the British Empire. It was from these that Indian politicians drew their inspiration. However, whereas the Europeans in their stand for the consolidation of their position were united, the Indians were divided and this disunity expressed in communal terms was exported.
In India, Hindu-Muslim relations in the nineteen twenties displayed a marked deterioration. Muslim anxiety and the failure to placate this religious minority even in the Nehru Report (1928) led Jinnah in 1929 to make his remark that Hindus and Muslims had come to the parting of the ways. At the Muslim League conference at Allahabad in December 1930, the concept of a separate Muslim state was enunciated. Thereafter the two streams of Indian nationalism followed divergent courses. In Fiji too the Muslims were a minority and after the defeat of Khalil Sahim in the 1929 election (discussed in Chapter V) they became fearful of their own political future and dissatisfied with the trend of Arya Samaj-dominated Indian politics. Already Muslim organizations had been in existence for some time (see Chapter VII) to cater for local Muslim needs and aspirations, among them was the Fiji Muslim League organized to co-ordinate these in 1926. In the strife that ensued the League in Fiji copied its counterpart in India: in Fiji there was no question of a separate state, instead separate representation became the objective. But this was not to be, India protested and its view was upheld although the regime in Fiji was willing to accede to Muslim wishes. The Secretary of State's acceptance of the advice of India on this account was commendably farsighted because it thwarted the permanent division of Indians on religious lines in politics. To have granted the Muslim demands might have paved the way for similar requests from other groups such as Punjabis, Madrassis or Gujeratis or even Indian Christians.

Of those who opposed common roll the Fijians were the most important group. They had entrusted their country to the British and were quite satisfied with them as guardians and did not wish them to be supplanted by others. Initially they had remained silent but with the emergence of Indian demands they awoke and asserted themselves. From the 1920's onwards their representatives stated their case. And with the Oxford-educated Ratu Sukuna at the helm from the 1930's, Fijian goals acquired positive and precise expression. The call was clear: the paramountcy of Fijian interests must not be diluted. Yet he was not unreasonable; his efforts in 1936 won Fijian willingness to trust the Government with the leasing of their land. But it is

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6 Comment on the situation in India is based on a study of the following texts: D.A.Low (1968), Pandey (1969), Philips and Wainwright (1970) and Sayeed (1968).
worth noting here the remarks of a Fijian writer:

Whereas in the land question, the Fijians, under the guidance and advice of Ratu Sukuna, had voluntarily surrendered the control of their land to the Government and thereby conceded to the demands of the Indians, no such voluntary concessions were made with regard to political development. 7

The resolutions of the 1933 Council of Chiefs on the franchise and the letter of their members tabled in the Legislative Council in 1935 reaffirmed their faith in the British and the Crown Colony system.

And in the situation of Indian agitation, European reaction and Fijian faith and anxiety, the colonial regime occupied a crucial position; it made the decisions. Of supreme importance was its convenant in 1874 with the Fijian Chiefs enshrined in the Deed of Cession. Sir Arthur Gordon and his successors had all interpreted it as an explicit pronouncement of the pre-eminent position of the Fijian in his native land. And from this stand there was no vacillation. Though the colonial regime was guilty of colluding with European settlers in 1915 when it restricted the municipal franchise, though Fletcher expressed publicly his concern for the European minority, on neither of these occasions was Fijian wish subordinated to the European will. Admittedly by resorting to paternalism and by choosing to rule through the chiefs the British slowed the growth of individualism and checked egalitarian tendencies in Fijian society. They pursued this policy without malicious intent. It, moreover, saved the Fijian race both from extinction and becoming serfs of others. Their separate institutions, such as provincial councils and the Council of Chiefs, not only sustained Fijian communalism but also provided Fijians at various levels with training in administering their own affairs albeit with official interference.

Where Gordon had hoped for adaptation, fossilization occurred instead. And the Fijians themselves grew reluctant to relinquish what habit had taught them to cherish. Despite its shortcomings the system had saved the Fijians first from the political designs of European settlers and later from the ambitions of the Indians. Here the British could claim the credit. What Gordon had established for Fiji in 1874 was uttered for Kenya in 1923. And since Kenya and Fiji were both part of the same Empire, the declaration that in Kenya

7 Bole 1968:79.
African interests were paramount meant that in Fiji the Fijians possessed the same guarantee. The 1923 proclamation buttressed the practice earlier established in Fiji. Thus Indian demands for common roll in Fiji, as in Kenya, had no chance of success. The Indians were no more triumphant than the European settlers before them when they had sought federation with New Zealand or Victoria or hoped for representative institutions. But the settlers were British and after they had abandoned their earlier hopes they climbed onto the bandwagon of Fijian interests and helped the Government and Fijians frustrate the Indians. Where the Europeans sensing a danger from the Indians had changed their constitutional course, the Indians, or a section of them, did not.

The Indians sought democracy through common roll and like the Europeans earlier they found it elusive. In so far as it existed in the Empire it was found in those colonies where European settler will prevailed and native welfare was of secondary importance; South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were examples. Even in these cases their democratic position in relationship to their British motherland was not clarified till the formulation of the Balfour Declaration (1926) and the enactment of the Statute of Westminster (1931). For the colonies of subject peoples such as Fiji democracy was a far off thing. And after the 1923 declaration for Kenya it was an impossible demand and the Indians were refusing to face reality. There was no intention in the 1920's or 30's of succumbing to such a request. As Kenneth Robinson has put it:

If British policy was certainly not opposed in principle to any idea of eventual self-government it equally certainly did not during the inter-war years conceive it as part of its duty 'officially to strive' to bring self-government into existence. A substantial proportion of that relatively small group who were closely and actively concerned with colonial policy was wholly sceptical of any idea that, in the Colonial Empire, self-government was likely to be achieved by the development of parliamentary, still less, democratic, institutions. 8

To this may be added Professor McIntyre's conclusion that

British policy-makers during the inter-war years were vague and unhurried. They now adhered religiously to their doctrine of trusteeship . . . but they were convinced that they had endless years to fulfil their task. 9

He further points out that the depression of the 1930's and the 1939-45 war led to 'a temporary strengthening of autocratic rule in many

8 Robinson 1965:89.
Fiji, indeed, was an example. British colonial policy existed on an imperial dimension and precedents and experiences in one colony influenced decisions in others. Fiji was no exception to this rule, though its peculiarities were not made subservient to generalities. In these matters Governors exercised considerable influence. Just as Gordon in the beginning had been guided by what his earlier governorships had taught him so Murchison Fletcher found his days in the constitutionally more rigid Hong Kong dictating greater governmental control. Within Fiji he found considerable support from some of his advisers. Neither European stalwarts like Hedstrom and Scott nor Fijian chiefs led by Sukuna cared for democracy which for them was synonymous with the danger of Indian domination. Here then lies the explanation for the willingness on the part of Fletcher and his allies to retreat from the elective principle which smacked of democracy. Both the Fijian position and European minority interests could be secured by the device of abolishing the municipal franchise and asserting greater control in the Legislative Council through nominated members sitting alongside elected ones: this would buttress the strength of the existing official majority.

An important factor was the communal franchise itself. Since each politician aspiring for victory had to appeal exclusively to his own race it was inevitable that he should capitalize on the fears and hopes of that group. Consequently too much emphasis was given to the interests of communal segments. And each community considered the fulfilment of its own parochial aspirations as essential for the general well-being. Europeans, for instance, had repeatedly called for more Indian labourers because these would have served their economic interests, and in their concern for their own profit they failed to comprehend the social and political implications of this element for the Fijian position. Indians, in their passion for their rights forgot the rights of others: they could not appreciate the genuine alarm of Europeans and Fijians at their numerical increase and

10 ibid:210.

11 As late as 1934 the Secretary for Indian Affairs wrote in his report for that year: '... those European planters who have suffered immense losses during the recent depression ... advocate the introduction in large numbers and chiefly in families of Indians as a means to reduce the working expenses of their plantations.' (C.P.2h/35.)
clamour for common roll. Finally a condition was reached where, as Professor Davidson has summed up:

The Legislative Council tends to revert to its origins as a basically advisory body; and the different groups of members become less concerned with convincing each other and more with making their separate attempts to persuade the Governor. 12 The last is true even outside the Council as is borne out by the behaviour of Scott and Hedstrom, K.B. Singh and Munsami Mudaliar; and the Council of Chiefs.

Communal franchise was first formalized in Cyprus in 1882 and then introduced in India in 1909 and in Ceylon in 1910. It failed to heal Hindu-Muslim differences in India and satisfied none except communal-minded politicians on both sides who exploited it to the full to further their own political careers. In Ceylon it was criticized by the constitutional commissions in 1928 and 1945. Martin Wight who contends that 'communal representations crystallizes and perpetuates differences' quotes from the Soulbury Report on Ceylon (1945) as thus describing the system: 'though superficially an attractive solution of racial differences and to some extent the line of least resistance it will be fatal to the emergence of that unquestioning sense of nationhood which is essential to the exercise of full self-government'. 13 The point has already been made that British policy-makers envisaged self-government as extremely distant, thus affording them indefinite time for training towards self-government. But it ought also to be noted that in Fiji the communities were not brought closer by the communal nature of the franchise. Though not the sole factor, it was an important contributor to dissension.

While there is no disagreement on the disadvantages of communal franchise one still needs to consider whether there was any other alternative to it for the plural society of Fiji in its particular stage of development in the 1920's and 30's. Could Britain, in fact, have introduced common roll? Had Britain done so it would have brought upon itself the ire of both Fijians and Europeans. Besides it was a democratic measure, and as mentioned earlier, thus out of the question. It would, in fact, have meant sanctioning Indian control;

12 Davidson 1948:129.
this too was not feasible. Most important it would have been a
betrayal of the Deed of Cession. Given the accumulated British
colonial experience, communal franchise was the only method with which
British policy makers were conversant at the time. One might argue
that Britain might have experimented by having both alongside an
official majority as a guarantee of the Fijian position. Again even
the slightest concession to common roll would have been opposed on
the grounds that this would in fact be acknowledging its validity for
a multi-racial society. And in Fiji, once accepted, pressure would
be exerted for its extension. If we contend that British policy
and the racist nature of colonialism rendered Britain inadequate for
the task, we must add that the task was gargantuan and hitherto no
government had grappled with the constitutional complexities of a
plural society, such as Fiji, and arrived at a decisive and stable
formula. For the problem Britain was responsible in so far as her
citizens had invaded Fiji's shores and forced Cession upon Cakobau
and then had introduced Indians as labourers as part of the British
mission to save the Fijians. This had created the complex plural
society. And in any evaluation of the British role one needs to
bear in mind the complicated character of the problem. In Fiji, the
disparities of number, economic power and potential, wealth, land
ownership, levels of education and facilities for its improvement
all compounded the difficulty. These made for tension and distrust.
Each race existing in its own social compartment typical of
hierarchically structured colonial societies was jealous of its own
rights and privileges. Where possible each attempted an extension
of these but resisted and protested against their attenuation. When
Indians wished to improve their position and it appeared to Europeans
and Fijians that it would be at their expense, the latter objected
vehemently. The British regime, obligated to Fijians and sympathetic
to Europeans would not satisfy Indian ambitions to the detriment of
the former communities so the latter could not find complete contentment.
Its sense of persecution bred in the brutalizing experience of the
indenture days and transmitted to later generations deepened with each
refusal.

As the Fijian community, through its members in the Legislative
Council, its Council of Chiefs, and through the new elite as found in
the Viti Cauravou, grew sensitive to threats, real and imagined, it was quick to remind the Government of its obligations to them. Though the British had displayed no tendency to renege on their promises to the Fijians, their task was facilitated by the change in direction of European politics after 1917 towards acceptance of the Deed of Cession, as the policy directive of prime concern. That this was motivated by self-interest rather than by the acceptance of new values of high principles is given credence by the pressures of Scott and Hedstrom to safeguard the 'pure' European position from encroachments by even the Part-Europeans.\[14\]

Unlike the Indians who still adhered to common roll when common sense should have advised otherwise, the European leaders displayed greater tact and astuteness. Once the impossibility of their earlier demands as well as its dangers for themselves were recognized they abandoned them. Their strategy towards the municipalities was no less sagacious. Within the jurisdiction of the municipal council came sanitation, road-building and maintenance, permits for the erection of buildings, licences for businesses, electricity, all matters that could determine the standard of living of a town. By its allocation of funds the Council decided which streets ought to be developed as first class residential areas and which could be neglected; by deciding upon rates it would impose restrictions. In a colony where residential segregation was not permissible through legislation, control of the municipal council could achieve an unusual degree of exclusion of those undesired in an area for one reason or another. Hence influence in the municipal council was essential. Consequently to have permitted a liberal franchise in the municipality while being stringent with that for the Legislative Council would have been foolish. If protection was to be adequate then it must be present in both cases. In 1915 the municipal franchise had been a means of consolidating the European position and it was logical that it should be appraised and amended in the 1930's when the issue of European security in Fiji was reconsidered. The municipal constitution in the present capital, Suva, as well as in the old capital, Levuka, was based on common franchise though hedged with a literacy test. To have amended the requirements for the literacy test by the inclusion of Indian languages would, in fact, have meant conceding to the Indian demand for common roll. It would have implied an acceptance of the principle

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\[14\] See Chapter IX.
of common roll. But this was contrary to the wishes of the majority of the colony's population and the Government. To have conceded would have meant Indian domination and this was no more tolerable in the principal town than it was in the colony. If it were imperative to resort to the nomination system in the Legislative Council then it was equally essential to do likewise with the municipal constitution. The two were linked. If Fijian paramountcy as well as minority interests were to be safeguarded then they ought to be given complete security. This could not be achieved without amending both the constitution of the Legislative Council and the Municipal Council.

In sum then, by 1937 Europeans were aligned on the side of the Government in acceptance of the Crown Colony system of government with partial nomination and communal franchise in the Legislative Council. They also acquiesced to wholly government nominated municipal councils in Suva and Levuka in lieu of elections on a common franchise as had prevailed from 1883 till its abolition in 1937. The justification was the avowed British policy of the paramountcy of Fijian interests. Though this was so, the object had also been to safeguard the position of the European minority. But Indians who had been enfranchised in 1929 were unhappy. A majority had rejected the constitutional changes of 1937. Guided by the Arya Samaj leadership and encouraged by forces in India they clamoured for common franchise. A minority though favouring common roll wished to continue their struggle through constitutional means from the Legislative Council. Another segment, the Muslims, were willing to accept communal franchise with a separate seat for themselves. Indeed the Indian community had become permanently divided. Given the divergent nature of Indian society this was not wholly unexpected.

Yet despite these occurrences, the goal of British policy had been preserved. Its aim was to protect the Fijian people from disruptive influences and to enable the race to survive. The political remedy prescribed by the various Governors from Gordon to Fletcher, and beyond, did not deviate from this end.15 Besides,

15 For a brief comment on significant constitutional developments in Fiji after 1937 see Appendix X.
Fijian political awakening made those who formulated and articulated opinion in their community sensitive to the tenor of constitutional change demanded by these others. Fijian leaders reacted by reaffirming their hope and trust in the Crown whose representatives reciprocated by abiding in their frequently professed objective that in Fiji, Fijian interests were paramount.
## APPENDIX Ia

### GOVERNORS AND ACTING GOVERNORS OF FIJI

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1901</td>
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<td>1902</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>C.Major (Acting)</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>Sir Everard im Thurn</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>C.Major (Acting)</td>
</tr>
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<td>August</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Sir Everard im Thurn</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Sir Charles Major (Acting)</td>
</tr>
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<td>February</td>
<td>1911</td>
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</tr>
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<td>June</td>
<td>1912</td>
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<td>July</td>
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<td>Sir Bickham Sweet-Escott</td>
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<td>Eyre Hutson (Acting)</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>C.H.Rodwell</td>
</tr>
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<td>May</td>
<td>1920</td>
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<td>1920</td>
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<td>T.E.Fell (Acting)</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>1927</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Sir Eyre Hutson</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>A.W.Seymour (Acting)</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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<td>1936</td>
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<td>1938</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>C.J.J.T.Barton (Acting)</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>J.Craig (Acting)</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>1939</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>1895</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Alfred Lyttelton</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>The Earl (later Marquess) of Crewe</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Lewis Harcourt (later Viscount Harcourt)</td>
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<td>May</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>A. Bonar Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>W.H. Long (later Viscount Long)</td>
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<td>January</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Viscount Milner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>W.S. Churchill (later Sir Winston Churchill)</td>
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<td>October</td>
<td>1922</td>
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<td>January</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>J.H. Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>L.C.M.S. Amery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Lord Passfield (Sidney Webb)</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister (later Viscount Swinton)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Malcolm Macdonald</td>
</tr>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>J.H. Thomas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>W.G.A. Ormsby-Gore (later Lord Harlech)</td>
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<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Malcolm Macdonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Lord Llyod</td>
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APPENDIX II

THE POPULATION OF FIJI

(a) Numbers of Components 1881 - 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1936</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
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<td>105,800</td>
<td>94,397</td>
<td>87,096</td>
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<td>17,105</td>
<td>40,286</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>305</td>
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<td>Rotuman</td>
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<td>2,176</td>
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<td>Other Pacific Islanders</td>
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<td>1,950</td>
<td>2,758</td>
<td>1,564</td>
<td>2,353</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<td>314</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>204</td>
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<td>120,124</td>
<td>139,541</td>
<td>157,266</td>
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+ Not given.
APPENDIX II

THE POPULATION OF FIJI

(b) Proportions of Components 1881 - 1936

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<th>1911</th>
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<td>62.42</td>
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<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.33</td>
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(c) Fiji-born and Alien-born among Indians, Europeans and Part-Europeans 1911 - 1936

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<th>1936</th>
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<td>Alien-born</td>
<td>Fiji-born</td>
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<td>28.82</td>
<td>71.18</td>
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<td>Part-European</td>
<td>95.58</td>
<td>4.42</td>
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APPENDIX III

THE POPULATION OF SUVA AND LEVUKA

(a) Suva: Numbers of Components 1911 - 1936

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<th>Component</th>
<th>1911</th>
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<th>1936</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>872</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>993</td>
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<td>1,436</td>
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<td>Part-European</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>34</td>
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<td>Chinese</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>278</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polynesian</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>278</td>
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<td>Others</td>
<td>319</td>
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<td>4,349</td>
<td>3,439</td>
<td>6,440</td>
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APPENDIX III

THE POPULATION OF SUVA AND LEVUKA

(b) Suva: Proportions of Components 1911 - 1936

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<th>1936</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town</td>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>Town</td>
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<td>4.18</td>
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### APPENDIX III

**THE POPULATION OF SUVA AND LEVUKA**

(c) **Levuka: Numbers of Components 1911 and 1936**

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-European</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polynesian</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,421</td>
<td>1,083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX IV

### EUROPEAN AND PART-EUROPEAN VOTERS 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>EUROPEAN</th>
<th>PART-EUROPEAN</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOUTHERN DIVISION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>413</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewa</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo East</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navua</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadavu</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>415</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
<td><strong>534</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH-WESTERN DIVISION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colo North</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ba</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lautoka</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadi</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sigatoka</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>319</strong></td>
<td><strong>188</strong></td>
<td><strong>507</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EASTERN DIVISION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomaiviti</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lau</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taveuni</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savusavu</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bua</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotuma</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>307</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX V

OCCUPATIONS 1911, 1921, 1936

(a) 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fijians living outside their villages</th>
<th>Unindentured Indians</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Part-Europeans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>10,357</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>-392</td>
<td>1,896</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional (includes clerks)</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic (includes housewives)</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>3,846</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundry</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed* (includes children and men of independent means)</td>
<td>1,353</td>
<td>7,731*</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>1,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation not stated</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td>25,976</td>
<td>3,691</td>
<td>2,376</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Children under ten years of age returned as unemployed.
## APPENDIX V

### OCCUPATIONS 1911, 1921, 1936

**(b) 1921**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fijians living outside their villages</th>
<th>Indians</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Part-Europeans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>19,433</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>1,354</td>
<td>3,179</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipping</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic (includes housewives)</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>13,492</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundry</td>
<td>1,453</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed (includes children and men of independent means)</td>
<td>1,989</td>
<td>20,078</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>1,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>3,193</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>6,897</td>
<td>60,619</td>
<td>3,848</td>
<td>2,729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX V

OCCUPATIONS 1911, 1921, 1936

(c) 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fijians</th>
<th>Indians</th>
<th>Europeans</th>
<th>Part-Europeans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1,477</td>
<td>17,335</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>1,002</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrying</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>1,728</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport &amp;</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce &amp;</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration &amp; Defence</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>1,098</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>1,148</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other &amp; Indeterminate</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>2,685</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7,222</td>
<td>25,190</td>
<td>1,668</td>
<td>996</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LITERACY RATES

**APPENDIX VI**

#### (a) Ability to Read and Write at least ONE language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>53.85</td>
<td>47.57</td>
<td>51.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>9.44</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>13.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>86.53</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>100.00+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-European</td>
<td>54.00</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>43.53+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ Refers to those aged 15 years and over.
++ Europeans and a great majority of Part-Europeans were enumerated on a schedule which did not request literacy particulars.
+++ The 1936 Census assumed that all Europeans were literate.

#### (b) Ability to Speak English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total of Component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fijian</td>
<td>5,822</td>
<td>5.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>6,273</td>
<td>7.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-European</td>
<td>2,731</td>
<td>59.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX VII

LETTERS PATENT 1929 and 1937: CLAUSES DEFINING QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND VOTERS

1929

Clause 17: Qualifications of European Elected Members

No person shall be qualified to be elected as a European Elected Member of the Council, or, having been so elected, to sit or vote in the Council unless he-

(1) Is qualified to be registered as a European elector; and

(2) Has been continuously resident for two years in the Colony; and either

(3) (a) Possesses and has possessed for at least twelve months next before the election, in his own right or in right of his wife, freehold property in the Colony of the clear value of five hundred pounds, or of the annual value of fifty pounds over and above all charges and incumbrances affecting the same; or

(b) Has been in occupation for at least twelve months next before the election, in his own right or in right of his wife, of freehold or leasehold property in the Colony of the extent of five hundred acres; or

(c) Rents and has rented for at least twelve months before the election freehold or leasehold property in the Colony of the yearly value of one hundred pounds; or

(d) Is possessed of a net annual income from all sources of not less than two hundred pounds.

Clause 18: Qualifications of Indian Elected Members

No person shall be qualified to be elected as an Indian Elected Member of the Council, or having been so elected, to sit or vote in the Council unless he-

(1) Is qualified to be registered as an Indian Elector; and

(2) Has been continuously resident for two years in the
Colony; and

(3) Is able to speak and understand the English language to the satisfaction of the Registration Officer subject to an appeal from the decision of the Registration Officer to the Supreme Court; and either

(4) (a) has resided in the Electoral Division for which he is a Candidate for twelve months previously preceding the date of election and is in possession of a net annual cash income of one hundred and twenty pounds; or

(b) possesses a net annual cash income of one hundred and fifty pounds arising from lands in that Division belonging to him in his own right.

Clause 25: Qualifications of European Electors

Every male person shall be qualified to be registered as a European elector, and when registered to vote at the election of European Elected Members of the Council, who -

(1) Is the son of parents of European descent, or, being the son or lineal descendant of a European father, can read, write and speak the English language;

(2) Is a British subject by birth or naturalisation having effect in the Colony;

(3) Is of the age of twenty-one years or upwards;

(4) Has been continuously resident in the Colony for twelve months; and

(5) Is possessed either -

(a) Of freehold or leasehold property, or both, within the Colony, of the total yearly value of twenty pounds over and above all charges and incumbrances affecting the same; or

(b) Of a net annual income, from all sources, of not less than one hundred and twenty pounds.

Provided that no person who is in receipt of salary payable out of the public revenue of the Colony shall be capable of being a European Elector.
Clause 26: Qualifications of Indian Electors

Every male person shall be qualified to be registered as an Indian Elector and when registered to vote at the election of Indian Elected Members of the Council, who -

1. Is the son of parents of Indian descent;
2. Is a British subject;
3. Is of the age of twenty-one years or upwards;
4. Has been continuously resident in the Colony for twelve months;
5. Can read and write a simple sentence and sign his name in any one of the following languages to the satisfaction of the registration officer:
   - English,
   - Hindi,
   - Urdu,
   - Tamil,
   - Telegu,
   - Gurmukhi; and
6. Has, for a period of not less than six months immediately preceding the date on which the Electoral Roll is closed, either -
   a. been in possession of freehold or leasehold property in the Colony of a total yearly value of five pounds over and above all charges and incumbrances thereon; or
   b. been in possession of a net annual cash income of seventy-five pounds; or
   c. been and remains the holder of a Government or Municipal licence issued under any Ordinance, the annual cost of the licence being not less than five pounds.

Provided that no person who is in receipt of salary payable out of the public revenue of the Colony shall be capable of being an Indian Elector.
 Clause 25: Qualifications of European Elected Members

No person shall be qualified to be elected as a European Elected Member of the Council, or, having been so elected, shall sit or vote in the Council, unless at the date of his nomination he -

(1) is qualified to be registered as a European elector; and

(2) has been continuously resident for two years in the Colony; and

(3) (a) possesses and has possessed for the preceding twelve months in his own right freehold property in the Colony of the clear value of not less than five hundred pounds, or of the annual value of not less than fifty pounds, over and above all charges and incumbrances affecting the same; or

(b) is, and has been for the preceding twelve months, in occupation in his own right of freehold or leasehold property in the Colony of the extent of not less than five hundred acres; or

(c) rents, and has rented for the preceding twelve months, in his own right, freehold or leasehold property in the Colony of the yearly value of not less than one hundred pounds; or

(d) is in possession of a net annual income in his own right, of not less than two hundred pounds.

 Clause 26: Qualifications of Indian Elected Members

No person shall be qualified to be elected as an Indian Elected Member of the Council, or having been so elected, shall sit or vote in the Council, unless at the date of his nomination he -

(1) is qualified to be registered as an Indian Elector; and

(2) has been continuously resident for two years in the Colony; and

(3) is able to speak and understand the English language to the satisfaction of the officer prescribed by law for the
purpose or, on appeal from the decision of that officer, of the Supreme Court; and

(4) (a) has resided in the Electoral Division for which he is a candidate for the preceding twelve months and is in possession of a net annual income of not less than one hundred and twenty pounds in his own right; or

(b) is in possession of a net annual income of not less than one hundred and fifty pounds arising from lands in that Division belonging to him in his own right.

Clause 33: Qualifications of European Electors

Every male person shall be qualified to be registered as a European elector, and when registered to vote at the election of European Elected Members of the Council, who at the date on which the electoral roll is closed -

(1) is the son of parents of European descent, or, being the son or lineal descendant of a European father, can read, write and speak the English language;

(2) is a British subject by birth, or by reason of annexation of territory, or by naturalisation having effect in the Colony;

(3) is of the age of twenty-one years or upwards;

(4) has been continuously resident in the Colony for the preceding twelve months; and

(5) is in possession in his own right either -

(a) of freehold or leasehold property, or both, within the Colony, of the total yearly value of not less than twenty pounds over and above all charges and incumbrances affecting the same; or

(b) of a net annual income of not less than one hundred and twenty pounds.

Provided that no person holding any office of emolument under the Crown in the Colony shall be qualified as aforesaid.
Clause 34: Qualifications of Indian Electors

Every male person shall be qualified to be registered as an Indian elector and when registered to vote at the election of Indian Elected Members of the Council, who at the date on which the electoral roll is closed -

(1) is the son of parents of Indian descent;
(2) is a British subject, or a native of the territories of any Indian Prince or Chief under Our suzerainty exercised through the Governor-General of India or through any Governor or other officer subordinate to the Governor-General of India;
(3) is of the age of twenty-one years or upwards;
(4) has been continuously resident in the Colony for the preceding twelve months;
(5) can read and write a simple sentence and sign his name in any one of the following languages to the satisfaction of the officer charged with the duty of registering electors:
   English,
   Hindi,
   Urdu,
   Tamil,
   Telegu,
   Gurmukhi,
   Gujarati; and
(6) has, for the preceding six months -
   (a) been in possession in his own right of freehold or leasehold property in the Colony of a total yearly value of not less than five pounds over and above all charges and incumbrances affecting the same; or
   (b) been in possession in his own right of a net annual income of not less than seventy-five pounds; or
   (c) been, and remains, the holder in his own right of a Government or Municipal licence issued under any Ordinance, the annual cost of the licence being not less than five pounds.

Provided that no person holding any office of emolument under the Crown in the Colony shall be qualified as aforesaid.
### RESULTS OF EUROPEAN COMMUNAL ELECTIONS 1905 - 1932

#### 1905

**Suva**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Marks</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. McRae</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. L. Lazarus</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. E. Brown</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. H. Ogilvie</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. E. Benjamin</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Fox</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Callaghan</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. L. Griffiths</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>265</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Planters' Representative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. B. Turner</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Murray</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. A. Coubrough</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. F. Powell</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Shaw</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. H. Garrick</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. McConnell</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>546</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Levuuka**

D. Robbie

Elected unopposed

**By-election for Planters' Representative on resignation of J. Murray**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. L. Lazarus</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Shaw</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>171</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Note: The table includes the number of votes each candidate received.*
### 1908

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>H.M.Scott</td>
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<td>E. Duncan</td>
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*1914*

### Suva

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### Vanua Levu-Taveuni

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### Northern Division

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### Eastern Division

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### Southern Division

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<td>R. Crompton</td>
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*1917*

### Suva

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<td>H.M. Scott</td>
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<td>F.E. Riemenschneider</td>
<td>123</td>
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*1917*
### Vanua Levu-Taveuni

<table>
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<td>J.A. Mackay</td>
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### Northern Division

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<td>F.C. Clapcott</td>
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<td>H.L. Kennedy</td>
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### Western Division

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### Southern Division

<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>R. Crompton</td>
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### Eastern Division

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### Vanua Levu-Taveuni (By-election)

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This election was held after the Supreme Court had ruled Mackay's earlier election invalid.

### 1920

#### Suva

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#### Southern Division

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1929

Suva

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Western Division

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Vanua Levu-Taveuni

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Eastern Division

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Southern Division

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.H.Ragg</td>
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1932

There were no European communal elections held, the following were all returned unopposed.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.M.Scott</td>
<td>Suva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>J.M.Hedstrom</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.P.Bayly</td>
<td>Western Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.H.Ragg</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.E.Willoughby Tottenham</td>
<td>Vanua Levu-Taveuni</td>
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### APPENDIX IX

#### RESULTS OF INDIAN COMMUNAL ELECTIONS 1929 - 1933

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Candidate 1</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Candidate 2</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<td>1929</td>
<td>Southern Division</td>
<td>Vishnu Deo</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>Elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>594</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>John F. Grant</td>
<td>162</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern &amp; Western Divisions</td>
<td>Parmanand Singh</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>Elected</td>
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<td>57</td>
<td>588</td>
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<td>Eastern Division</td>
<td>James Rao Ramchandar</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Elected</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Khalil Sahim</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Southern Division</td>
<td>K.B.Singh</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>Elected</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>471</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narbahadur Singh</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Northern &amp; Western Divisions</td>
<td>M.Mudaliar</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elected unopposed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Division</td>
<td>No nomination</td>
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**BY-ELECTION 1933**

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<th>Candidate 2</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Southern Division</td>
<td>K.B.Singh</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>Elected</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>438</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narbahadur Singh</td>
<td>25</td>
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FROM 1937 to 1963, there was no change in the constitution of Fiji except for the introduction of communal franchise in the elections of the Suva Town Board in 1948. But in those years events occurred that had a significant bearing on later political development. Perhaps most important was the setting up of a separate Fijian administration in 1944 with Sukuna as Secretary for Fijian Affairs. This was finally institutionalizing a separate state within a state based on the principles of Lugard and Cameron at a stage when they had become out of date elsewhere. The demand and pressures for this administration had come from the Fijians themselves and had been made possible by the presence in Fiji as Governor of Philip Mitchell, a disciple of Cameron. The aim of the administration was to preserve the Fijian way of life and to improve the economic condition of the Fijians. Again separate development was fostered. In a plural society where integration was essential a policy of compartmentalization was being entrenched. Also important was that European officials, and non-official European legal and financial advisers of the Fijian Affairs Board could ascertain that European influences percolated into Fijian deliberations. But the Indians and Fijians, the two largest components of the population were growing further apart instead of coming closer. There was no forum for dialogue let alone rapprochement. They met only in the Legislative Council where the chief aim was to score political points from set pieces decided in isolation and well in advance. But this separatism, fraught with grave economic consequences for the Fijians and with political implications for the whole colony, enhanced the political position of the Fijian people.

1 Also it is important to note that from 1944 Sukuna sat on the Executive Council. In 1948 Indians were also granted nominated representation on the Executive Council. The Governor chose the Hon. K.B. Singh.

2 The economic consequences were that the Fijians continued to remain subsistence agriculturalists and were conspicuous by their absence from the cash economy. For a discussion of this point see Fisk 1970 particularly and Watters 1969. The best study on post-war Fijian problems is still the work of Professor Spate (C.F.13/59.) (C.P.13/59.).
The second salient feature of the 1937 to 1963 period was the behaviour of the Indians. At the outbreak of the Second World War Indians refused to enlist for service overseas unless paid equal rates and given the same conditions of service as the white man. British colonialism sustained as it was by double standards wherein the Anglo-Saxon was on top and the black below could not permit this concession, even during an emergency. The Indian, therefore, decided to stay at home. On the other hand the Fijians, frequently told that they were the most loyal of subjects, volunteered readily and served creditably in the Pacific against the Japanese.

Not only did the Indians fail to enlist in 1943 they embarked on a sugar cane strike which undermined the war effort. The cause of the dispute between the millers (C.S.R. Company) and the growers was cane prices. Consequently the alienation between the Indians and the other races was aggravated. Then in 1947 Britain withdrew from India, heralding the beginning of the end of the British Empire. In Fiji Europeans interpreted it as a further example of Indian ingratitude, arrogance and presumption.

In 1959 another strike occurred; this time against the oil companies and in Suva riots followed directed mainly against the Europeans. The strike was a consequence of insufficient wages for local employees despite increasing profits for the foreign companies. The riots were the outcome of local frustration with the colonial system which upheld European privileges and tolerated economic inequalities by ignoring the calls of local working men and trade unionists for redress. Thereafter Europeans saw their privileged position in Fiji seriously threatened. Anxiety coupled with the evidence of decolonization abroad made Fiji Europeans even more reactionary in their efforts to protect one of their last bastions. They were encouraged by officials, especially those transferred from independent Africa, and by the European press. The latter with an influence extending beyond the European community painted the blackest possible pictures of newly independent states in its efforts, remarkably successful, to create fear about the possibility of

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3 For this dispute see Shephard 1945; Calman 1952:162-180.

4 This paragraph is based on a reading of the English language press and discussions with eye-witnesses. See also Mayer 1963:114-115.
independence.

And in the vanguard for political reform were still the Indians. What aroused greatest indignation was the continuing Indian clamour for common franchise. Yet another strike in 1960 in the sugar industry, led by Indian politicians discredited not only them and their supporters but also their ideals of constitutional advancement. The local jeremiahs of independence were quick to propagandize dangers of political progress with 'irresponsible politicians'. Again the foreign-owned press and the Government in its anger with the strikers, ignored the causes of the strike.

Indian demands for political reform continued to be rejected by both Europeans and Fijians. To some degree the Indians by their intransigence over common roll were responsible for the reaction. The Indian population continued to grow in the 1940's and 1950's and fears of Indian domination grew equally. When advised to consider family planning and birth control, Indian leaders denied that Fiji was plagued with over-population. They compounded their folly by arguing that more people were needed to develop the resources of the Colony and contending that Fijians ought to lease their lands more freely to absorb the rising population. The Fijians, always sensitive about their lands which were limited, saw their protection to lie in the perpetuation of British rule.

Fijians made clear that they did not wish to see the end of colonialism and their link with the British Crown and in this they had the complete support of the Europeans. Fijians also made explicit that any transfer of political power must be returned to them as the community whose chiefs had entered into a covenant with Britain.

Britain, pressured by world opinion especially in the United Nations, found herself in an increasingly embarrassing position over a colony which refused to be released from her control. British suggestions in 1961 for constitutional change and the introduction of the membership system were rejected by the Fijians and Europeans as politically premature. But continuing official pressure forced

the Fijians in 1963 to accept universal suffrage on a communal basis. And for the first time the Fijian people were able directly to elect their own representatives to the Legislative Council. But the nomination system was also retained as well as the official majority. Each race elected ¼ of its members while two from each group were to be nominated by the Crown. The Legislative Councillors were permitted separately to elect two from each of their groups to be members of the Executive Council. In 1964 the membership system and the concept of collective responsibility of Executive Council members were introduced. One Indian, one Fijian, and one European were created members and given portfolios. Fiji seemed to be on the path to self-government.

The elections of 1963 were significant in two ways: 6 (1) the introduction of the ballot among the Fijians did not see the end of the chiefs as the people's representatives as some elements, especially Indians, had expected. Rather the elections consolidated the power of the Fijian establishment by returning to the Legislative Council chiefs and those commoners who accepted their patronage. (2) the Indians in the sugar cane districts supported the candidates of the newly-formed Federation Party which comprised those who had led the 1960 strike. This group was branded as extremist. Also the Indian community was divided into two distinct groups each unwilling to compromise or co-operate with the other. 7

Having imposed the membership system in Fiji, Britain decided after a year's trial to call all the Legislative Council members to a Conference in London. Again the force of world opinion was dictating the British haste.

In Fiji preparations for the conference were marred by controversy. 8 Indian members of the Legislative Council belonging to the Federation Party expressed the hope for independence and common franchise. They claimed that the European press and the Government

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6 For a study of these elections see Meller and Anthony 1968.

7 One group of cane growers belonged to the Kisan Sangh (founded 1937) which later formed the Indian National Congress (1960) and became part of the Alliance. The other, the majority, were members of the Federated Cane Growers Associations, and later became the foundation of the Federation Party. Urban Indians joined one of these groups, the majority the latter.

8 Based on a reading of the Fiji Times, Pacific Review, Pacific Monthly of 1965 and discussions with politicians.
Public Relations Office were deliberating misrepresenting them to the public and therefore they would in future neither make public statements about their strategy nor discuss their plans with other groups.

The Europeans and Fijians, unanimous in their repudiation of common roll and independence, were joined by a group of anti-Federation Party Indians. The Fijians also wanted no discussion in London relating to Fijian land.

In London the strained atmosphere was not helped by the British delegation's wish to settle matters quickly without too much discussion. The real victors of the conference were the Europeans - judging from the number of seats they obtained in the new Legislative Council. Fijians with a population of approximately 228,000 obtained 14 seats - 2 of these were for members chosen by the Council of Chiefs. The Indians with a population of about 256,000 or nearly 50% obtained two fewer seats with 12, while the Europeans who now had the Chinese on their electoral roll and given the designation of General Electors, numbering about 28,000 or almost 7% of the population obtained 10 seats which represented nearly 28% of the total number of seats. Most importantly, they held the balance of power. The justification for European over-representation was given as their contribution through capital and skill to the well-being of the Colony. The Indians of the Federation Party left London thoroughly dissatisfied and were particularly irate at the number of seats given to the Europeans.

The new constitution was noteworthy for the introduction of cross-voting by which an elector was given three votes and required to cast one for a candidate from each of three electoral groups - one for a Fijian, one for an Indian and one for a General Elector. But the communal franchise was also retained, and each elector also had a vote to cast for a candidate in his communal constituency.10

Elections under the new constitution were held late in August. The Federation Party made its chief plank common roll and independence and called for the destruction of the new constitution. The newly-

9 L.C. Debates 1965:627-798. Based also on an examination of a confidential report on the conference.

10 Also in 1966 common franchise was introduced in all town council elections except in Suva and Lautoka. And the Fijians were permitted to elect all their representatives to the 14 Provincial Councils by secret ballot.
formed Alliance, which was a loose coalition of communal parties, made multi-racial co-operation its chief aim.

The Alliance gained a majority of the seats; it won 23 seats but the two Independents and two Council of Chiefs members also aligned themselves with it giving it 27 to the 9 of the Federation Party. It was interesting that the Alliance had won all 9 Fijian and 6 of the 7 General Elector communal seats - the other General Elector communal seat went to an Independent. The Federation Party won all 9 Indian communal seats polling 65.26% of the votes there - the rest went to unsuccessful Independents and 3 Alliance candidates. The Alliance had polled 67.36% of the votes for its 9 Fijian communal seats. The 9 seats in the three 3-man cross-voting constituencies were all won by the Alliance simply because a significant number of Indians voted for its candidates while hardly any Fijians supported the Federation Party which they saw as an extremely pro-Indian and anti-Fijian organization.

Basically the voting pattern was racial; each community voting for the party which promised to safeguard its particular interests - aspiring politicians during their campaigns capitalized on and exploited communal fears. Generally the elections were peaceful and without violence. After the election political calm set in until September 1967 when the ministerial system was introduced. Thereupon the Federation Party again condemned the constitution as undemocratic and walked out of the Council. Its members resigned their seats as a form of protest and thus forced the by-elections of August 1968.

For the by-elections the Federation Party carried out a vigorous and vituperative campaign and made the iniquities of the constitution the main issue; it warned the Indians that they must unite and support the Federation Party otherwise their security was in danger. The Federation press and political meetings consistently criticized the privileged status of whites in Fiji as well as the Fijian chiefs.

The Alliance had difficulty in obtaining Indian candidates but

11 For a comparison between the 1966 and 1972 General Election see Ali 1973(a).

12 The author attended all the public meetings in Suva of both the parties before and during the election campaign. Also based on a reading of press reports.
succeeded in finding them by nomination day. It went to the Indian people on the basis of its record of the previous year. Because it was completely out of touch with the Indian community it failed to appreciate that Indians were genuinely dissatisfied with the constitution. It was significant that the Alliance was still opposed to independence for Fiji in the future.

The by-elections resulted in a resounding victory for the Federation Party which retained the 9 seats as well as increased their Indian support. Their number and percentage of the votes rose despite the fact that fewer Indian voters went to the polls in 1968 than in 1966. They obtained 78.55% of the Indian vote. This was not unexpected because they were able to communicate better with the Indians and their campaign was more vigorous and co-ordinated than that of the Alliance.

The Alliance, especially the Fijian elements within it, took the defeat badly and reacted with unprecedented indignation. Racial tension remained high for several weeks. Some of the leaders of the Fijian Association which was the largest constituent body of the Alliance, toured the country calling altogether about 18 well-attended meetings of Fijians. Several resolutions were passed: (1) Fijians reaffirmed their loyalty to Britain and reiterated their wish to perpetuate their links with her. Independence and common roll were denounced. (2) The deportation of those Indian leaders of the Federation Party who were not Fiji-born was called for. (3) The dismissal of Indian civil servants who had helped the Federation Party was demanded.

Despite the tension, violence was limited to isolated incidents involving individuals.

For the Alliance, the by-elections proved a turning-point. During the initial anger some Fijian leaders suggested the dismantling of the Alliance and the Fijian Association standing alone as a communal party. They argued that they had offered the Indians their hand of friendship and this had been rejected. Therefore they had

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13 The difficulty arose from the small following that the Alliance had at the time. All candidates were reluctant to stand because they recognized that their chances of success were remote. For a study of the 1968 by-election see Anthony 1969.

14 Based on personal observation. The author was appointed Secretary of the Alliance at the beginning of May 1969 and remained in the position till February 1970 when he resigned to come to A.N.U. During that time he saw documents and heard discussions which
come to the parting of the ways. But moderate counsel prevailed and
the Alliance after introspection decided to reform its own political
structure and make increased efforts to woo Indian support.

It even offered to go to London for new constitutional discussions
provided the Federation Party took a more conciliatory attitude. As
a result constitutional discussions began in August 1969. But the
Alliance made two firm stipulations: first only the elected
representatives of the people were to take part in these discussions.
Thus the National Federation Party was unable to invite any of its
Fijian members to participate, and claim to speak for any section of
the Fijian people. The Alliance remained the sole voice of the
Fijian people. Secondly, the Alliance had a significant majority
on the constitutional committee and later at the Conference. The
deliberations were to be secret; the public were informed of the
results - not of the discussions. The purpose here seemed aimed
at preventing elements such as the press, bitter about the slow but
sure erosion of European privileges through political progress, from
sabotaging the dialogue, particularly when Fijian-Indian amity brought
rapid decisions.

In October, the leader of the Opposition and founder of the
Federation Party, A.D.Patel died. The new leadership was less
forceful and more conciliatory as well as disunited.

At the next meeting in November the Alliance announced that it
was prepared to accept dominion status for Fiji. This meant
independence. The Federation Party, taken aback, was delighted and
reciprocated by offering to shelve common roll. The volte face of
the Alliance on independence requires some comment. It was the
result of decisions taken after much deliberation in the various
institutions that governed the Fijian people. The reasons behind
these decisions were:

1. There was a growing feeling that
decisions of the British Government on Fiji's constitution were not
wholly free from pressures exerted by the United Nations. It was
argued that the Fourth Committee which dealt with the affairs of
dependent territories might sympathize with the demands for common roll
or proportional representation as well as majority rule - all
unacceptable to Fijian opinion. If Fiji became independent
immediately such external pressures could be negated. (2) With the numerical superiority of the Indians steadily growing it would become increasingly difficult for political control of their country to be returned to the Fijians. Postponement of independence was contrary to Fijian interests. (3) With the Alliance having a majority in the Legislative Council, Fijians were in a strong position to negotiate for independence. A future general election under the existing constitution, in view of the 1968 by-elections might diminish its power. Therefore it was best to approach independence from a position of strength. (4) The existing political organization was only a short step from complete internal self-government and this step ought to be taken immediately to protect Fijian interests and to allow the Fijians control of Fiji's internal political development to be taken over by the Fijians. This was dictated by the very poor position of the Fijians in the economy of their country. They were conspicuous by their absence in the commercial sector and the cash economy of their native land.

Whatever the reasons the Indians were generally delighted that the Fijians were prepared to accept independence. Despite their reservations on independence the Europeans given no other alternative accepted the Fijian stand rather than jeopardize their own position by quarrelling with the indigenous people, their staunch allies.

Without going into detail it should be noted that the constitutional discussions beginning in Suva in August 1969 and concluding in London in April-May 1970 proved peaceful and conciliatory. The following decisions were reached: (1) Fiji was to have a bicameral system. In the lower and elected house Fijians and Indians were to have parity, 22 seats each (12 communal and 10 cross-voting) and the General Electors 8 (3 communal and 5 cross-voting). The Upper house was to be nominated. - 8 members to be chosen by the Council of Chiefs, 7 by the Prime Minister, 6 by the Leader of Opposition and 1 by the Council of Rotuma. (2) Matters affecting Fijian customs and land could not be passed by either House unless supported by 6 out of 8 of the Senate representatives of the Council of Chiefs. The Constitution recognized the special position of the

16 Based on a study of confidential material. For a study on the 1970 Conference and Constitution see Vasil 1972.
Fijians in Fiji. The rights of the other communities were not specifically defined but seen to have been guaranteed by the general Bill of Rights written into the Constitution. (3) Common franchise was to be implemented immediately in the municipal elections of the two largest towns, Suva and Lautoka. It had already been in existence since 1966 in the other elected town boards. (4) Elections under the new constitution were postponed for no more than six months after independence. 17

Independence came on 10 October 1970, after exactly 96 years of British rule. But the new constitution was not necessarily final. It was subject to investigation by a Royal Commission to be appointed during the lifetime of the first Parliament after independence. The feasibility of common roll was to be one of its terms of reference. Yet the Commission's decision would not be binding, it would be subject to approval, modification or even rejection by Parliament - a Parliament wherein the Alliance was assured of a majority. Equally significant, the National Federation Party, predominantly Indian in its power base, had voluntarily concurred to such a solution.

17 They were held in April 1972. For a study on the 1972 General Election see Ali 1973(a) and on the position of Indians in Fiji after independence see Ali 1973(b).
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