

**THE FIJI LABOUR PARTY
AND THE BY-ELECTIONS
OF DECEMBER 1985:
A REPORT**

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DECEMBER 1985: A REPORT**

Vijay Naidu

INTRODUCTION

The death of a member of parliament of Fiji, and the withdrawal of another member set the stage for two crucial by-elections in Fiji recently. Ordinarily the elections would have not evoked much interest or even effort, but the recent advent of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) added a new political dimension to these by-elections (for origins of the FLP see Robertson, 1985; Howard 1985; Naidu 1986). Moreover, these by-elections, so close to the forthcoming general elections scheduled for 1987, provide an excellent base from which to project future political patterns in Fiji.

It was for these reasons that a major research effort was undertaken to study the two by-elections. The vacancies arose as the result of death of the incumbent in the case of the Lau/Rotuma Fijian Communal Seat and the resignation of the M.P. for the North Central Indian Seat. The former, Mr Jonati Mavoia, had been the Minister for Foreign Affairs and a long-standing member of the ruling Alliance Party Cabinet. The latter, Sir Vijay R. Singh, had earlier been in the Alliance Party Cabinet as Fiji's Attorney General before being forced to give up his position because of involvement in the Flour Mills case.¹ He had then been welcomed into the National Federation Party and won the Indian National Seat in the General Elections of 1982. He had resigned this seat upon being appointed the Chief Executive of the newly established Sugar Cane Growers Council.

It is widely accepted in Fiji that the Lau/Rotuma Fijian Communal seat is perhaps the safest Alliance Party seat (the leader of this party, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara comes from Lakeba, Lau) and that the North-Central Indian National Seat is a stronghold of the National Federation Party.² In the General Elections of 1982 these two major parties won the two seats respectively.

Aims and Objectives of this Electoral Study

The by-elections of December 1985 were unique in the post-colonial history of Fiji because for the first time a political party was contending with an explicitly non-racial platform. Previously the Alliance Party, the National Federation Party, the Fijian Nationalist Party and the Western United Front were all founded on "racial" lines.

With the exception of the Nationalists, the political parties preached multiracialism in public but were avowedly racial in wooing sectional support, a tendency encouraged by the Fijian Constitution which favours race politics (Ali 1980; Naidu 1979; Norton 1979; Lal 1984). The origins of this condition lay in British colonialism when petty bourgeois representatives of each racial category formed a political elite that bargained with each other while the partisan white colonial regime acted as director.

Nevertheless, the formation of a Fiji Labour Party (FLP) seemed to introduce a new dimension into the political arena in Fiji. With the advent of the FLP the division between capital and labour became the avowed basis of political activity. Prior to this as noted by Vasil, Fiji's two political parties were pro-capitalist (1971; see also Sutherland, 1984).

The purpose of this study, then, is to assess the extent to which voters in the North-Central Indian National Constituency and the Lau/Rotuma Fijian Communal Constituency were moved by the non-racial 'class' appeal of the FLP.³ At a superficial level a vote for the FLP would seem to imply a vote along class lines although interviews with voters helped to further clarify the rational for voting for this party rather than the other parties. Such interviews also served to elicit other reasons for voting FLP.

Methodology

Shifts in voting behaviour were closely scrutinised and their implications for the 1987 General Elections identified. The month-long study began on the 25th of November and extended till the 20th of December.

The study proposed to investigate the strategies adopted by the various political parties to win the by-elections.⁴ Between 7-15 December, the researchers

toured the North-Central Indian National Constituency. The period included the dates of polling, 11-14 December. Community leaders, party activists, polling-shed organisers, party candidates, politicians and voters were interviewed. The voter-interviews were on a random basis, although a cross-section of the constituency in terms of ethnicity, religion, occupation and status was taken into account. In all a hundred and ten persons were interviewed of whom 80 preferred to remain anonymous and indicated that they did not like their interviews to be recorded. In one instance a spokesman was elected to voice the opinions of fifteen other persons (12 Indo-Fijians and 3 Ethnic Fijians).

A number of difficulties constrained the research project. The researchers' inability to begin the study in mid-November meant that the reaction to issues discussed and nuances of political party meetings were not observed. The second-hand reporting by newspapers and the FBC were not regarded as very satisfactory as only a partial coverage was made and assessment of party support at rallies differed.

Secondly, given that the time frame was fairly short, our ability to do many in-depth interviews was limited. Moreover, many voters did not feel like speaking too loudly about their political affiliations. Some party-officials at the polling stations, while friendly, were not forthcoming about the number of persons going through their sheds. Our observations of polling stations were over short periods only as the polling stations were far apart. Unfortunately the polling stations in the Yasawas were too remote for us to visit.

Thus our attempt to systematically observe voter turn-out and support for particular parties was affected by both time and resources. In short we could not be at every polling station all the time. This short-coming was offset somewhat by questioning polling shed attendants about what their impressions were of the voter turnout and trends in voting. A cross-check of numbers going through particular sheds, ethnicity of those present at particular sheds, and ethnicity of registered voters in the polling station areas provided us with useful insights.

Lau/Rotuma Fijian Communal Seat

Three parties nominated their respective candidates. The Alliance Party nominated a former permanent Secretary of Education and Fiji's current United Nations envoy, Filipe Bolc, a Lauan, for this seat. The Fiji

Labour Party selected Jokapeci Koroï (another Lauan), the General Secretary of the Fiji Nurses Association, as its candidate. Sakeasi Butadroka, the President of the Fijian Nationalist Party, was nominated as the FNP candidate.

Objections were filed by the Alliance Party against both Koroï and Butadroka. In the case of Koroï, the objection about one of her six nominators was sustained. Each candidate was supposed to have no less than six and no more than eight nominators. The Returning Officer, Josefa Serulagilagi, found that one of Koroï's nominators, Luke Mocevakaca, was not a registered voter (Fiji Times Nov. 22, p.3). He had a namesake in Vanuabalavu who was the registered voter (Fiji Sun Nov. 22, p.2).⁵

Objections to Butadroka's nomination were not accepted. Similarly the FLP's objection to Filipe Bole's nomination on the grounds that he had not been a resident of Fiji for a sufficient length of time was rejected. The Returning Officer ruled that although Bole was not entitled to vote (he was not a registered voter), he was legally entitled to stand.⁶ In any case, the FLP's objection was not sent in within the prescribed time and it was not addressed to the Returning Officer (Fiji Sun, Nov. 22, 1985, p.2).

The Secretary of the FLP, Mr Krishna Dutt, claimed that there was something 'sinister' about the disqualification of Mrs Koroï and that it would be challenged in court (Fiji Times Nov. 22, p.3). This initial response from the stunned Party Secretary occurred when neither the candidate nor the Party President were present in Suva. They were both in Rotuma, campaigning. Subsequently Mrs Koroï maintained that she was still in the running but the party President's remark that the FLP was thinking ahead to 1987 foreshadowed the acceptance by the FLP that its nomination was faulty (Fiji Times, Nov. 24, p.3). No legal action was taken. The FLP had previously threatened legal action about the disqualification of its candidate, Ema Drauvesi, and the multiple registration of some voters in the Suva City Council Elections. No litigation has taken place on these matters.

Meanwhile Butadroka visited Lakeba and Rotuma claiming considerable support. He said that he did not have the resources to tour other islands. Mr Butadroka also claimed that he was warmly welcomed in Tubou, Lakeba, and that a branch of FNP had been set up (Sunday Times, Dec. 1). This claim was strongly denied by the supposed branch office holders. It was argued that Butadroka had mistread the hospitality and curiosity of the

people as an expression of political support. According to one source, "The whole of Fiji knows that Lakeba is the Alliance Party and the Alliance Party is Lakeba" (Fiji Times Dec. 2, p.3). This assertion was typical of the comments made in response to Butadroka's optimism about his chances of winning the seat.

Of the 8303 registered voters in the Lau/Rotuma Constituency, 5329 voters favoured Alliance candidate, Filipe Bole and 266 voted for Butadroka (Fiji Times Dec. 9, 1985, p.3). The latter, therefore lost his deposit. This result was not at all surprising given the strength of Alliance support in this constituency. One dimension of the polling that bears comment is that a majority of the polling stations were the residences of Turaga-ni-koro. It is surprising that residences of village-headmen were used for voting purposes, given the fact that the hierarchy of the Fijian Administration, especially at this level, is so closely identified with the Alliance Party. Although the FLP did not participate in this election, it is doubtful if it could have gained more than 20 percent of the vote. It is apparent that there is some dissatisfaction with the Alliance in a number of Lau islands and in Rotuma but it is unlikely that it is sufficient enough to threaten Alliance hegemony. The result of the Lau/Rotuma Fijian Communal Seat was predictable given the Lauan identification with the Alliance Party and the lack of resources available to the Nationalists. By contrast the North Central Indian National Seat was difficult to forecast.

Candidates for the North-Central Indian National Seat

In the North-Central Indian National Seat, three political parties nominated their candidates. The Alliance Party and the National Federation Party candidates were two brothers, Uday Singh and James Shankar Singh respectively. The FLP man was Mahendra Pal Chaudhry.

Uday Singh, the younger of the two brothers had been the unsuccessful candidate for the Alliance Party in the first General Election of 1977 and again in the General Election of 1982. He is a large capitalist cane grower with a farm of more than 450 acres and about a dozen casual farmhands.⁷ He also owns a shop near his homestead in Kumkum, Ba. Mr Singh is Chairman of the Ba Rural Local Authority as well as Ba/Tavua Drainage Board. He is active in religious and educational bodies. He portrayed himself as the local man who had provided 'community service for over 17 years' in the constituency (Sunday Times, 24 Nov, p.3).

The NFP candidate, Mr James Shankar Singh, was a former member of the Alliance Party and Chairman of the Indian Alliance. He had been a Parliamentarian and a member of the Alliance Cabinet as Minister for Health and Social Services and also as Minister for Communication, Works and Transport. He had resigned from the Alliance because of differences with the Alliance leader, the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, over the signing of cane contracts. Mr James Shankar Singh subsequently joined the National Federation Party and like Sir Vijay Singh before him, was now presented to the electorate as a staunch NFP man. Mr James Shankar Singh is also a large landlord and cane farmer having possession of more than 400 acres of prime cane-land.

Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, the Fiji Labour Party candidate, had grown up in the Ba area but had been employed in the Audit Department of the Fiji Civil Service in Suva. He had given up his position in this Department to join the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA) and the Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC). He is currently the Secretary of FPSA and Assistant General Secretary of FTUC. Mr Chaudhry figured prominently in the formation of FLP as its Assistant Secretary.

In terms of personal appeal and ability of the three candidates, Mahendra Chaudhry stood out. He was better educated, more articulate and well informed on the various issues that were raised during the campaign. James Shankar Singh with his former ministerial experience was second to Chaudhry in his knowledgeability and speech making. The Alliance candidate, apart from his handsome profile (which he dwelled on) was much less articulate and lacked awareness of wider issues. He was the home-grown candidate attuned to local level concerns and this perhaps was his forte.

This ranking was derived from the views expressed by the interviewees and was reinforced by newspaper articles in which the candidates were quoted. Their speeches on the eve of the by-elections, assessed terms of content and presentation, also substantiated the ranking. Personal qualities, however, were to be affected by the image of the three political parties on the eve of the election.

Party Prospects

In an interview in Veisaru (December 1985) the NFP MP, Mr Jim Smith, said that "The Alliance and Labour

have all to gain and nothing to lose, the NFP has all to lose". This remark summarised the position of the three parties at the advent of the election campaign.

For much of the earlier part of the year, the NFP appeared to be racked by internal rows. In March, the official NFP candidate for the Lautoka Indian Communal Seat by-election (to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of the former leader of the NFP, Jai Ram Reddy), Dr Balwant Singh Rakha was defeated by Mr Devendra Singh, the NFP Youth Wing Candidate (Fiji Times, March 5, 1985). Subsequently NFP Youth Wing leaders continuously sought the new NFP leader Siddiq Koya's resignation on the grounds that Koya had stated publicly that if his candidate lost, he would resign. After Rakha's defeat by 13 votes, legal objections were raised. The saga of the Youth Wing split continues to this day with court action impending against Devendra Singh for allegedly leading an illegal procession and throwing objects at Koya's house!

A spate of damaging publicity preceded the NFP's campaign in December. Three weeks before polling began in the North-Central Indian National constituency, the NFP lost all its seats in the Suva City Council elections. From a situation of being the majority Party in the Capital City it was reduced to having no seats. Former NFP councillors stood as Independents in the Suva Ward of the City and won, whereas those standing as NFP candidates in other wards lost. The blow against the NFP was particularly damaging in its former stronghold constituency, the Samabula Ward, where it did not win any seats. Both the NFP and the Alliance Party lost votes to the Fiji Labour Party. The latter won 8 seats, the Alliance 7 seats and Independents 5 seats. The Independents declared afterwards that they had left the NFP because of its leader, Siddiq Koya.

After the 16 November debacle, the NFP's Nadi branch agreed not to sponsor any candidate for the Nadi Town Council elections on December 14. The Fiji Sun in its first page article "Feds Quit Nadi Vote" noted that this would be the first time in eighteen years of NFP domination of the Nadi Town Council that this Party was not going to contest the elections. A senior NFP official, Mr Hargovind Lodhia, declared, "no one wants to stand under the party banner because it is unreliable" (Fiji Sun, Nov 22, 1985).

A week later on November 29, the Fiji Times reported the resignation of three prominent NFP members of Parliament - its former Deputy Opposition Leader, Mrs

Irene Jay Narayan, her frontbench colleague and the Treasurer of the NFP, Mr Hargovind Lodhia, and the Opposition spokesperson on educational matters, Dr Satendra Nandan. All three named Siddiq Koya as the reason for their resignation. Mrs Narayan, an NFP Parliamentarian since 1966, maintained that she was "ashamed of being associated with the NFP any longer. As an Opposition, it had become totally ineffective" (Fiji Times, Nov. 29, 1985; p.3). This erosion of NFP image and membership followed a long period of media coverage of intra-party fighting and factionalism within NFP.

The Fiji Times also reported that Mr Koyat's contribution to the 1986 Budget debate was marred by interjections from Dr Nandan and Mr Davendra Singh (both formerly of the NFP). Mr Koya accused Dr Nandan of encouraging communism (Fiji Times, Nov. 29 1985, p.3).

The Fiji Times headline on Saturday Nov. 30 read: "Moves Afoot to Oust Koya"⁸ and the views of various NFP MPs were presented about the three resignations of the previous day. Although the move to oust Koya was not widespread, one unnamed NFP MP said that Mr Koya would be removed after the North Central Indian National by-elections. The delay was to prevent damaging the candidacy of James Shankar Singh by further negative media reports.

These public revelations of a split in the NFP, together with its candidate having an Alliance post previously, obviously handicapped the Federation Party.

In sharp contrast to the NFP image of a party riddled with internecine feuds, the Alliance Party continued to uphold the aura of unity and stability. Evidence of internal divisions emerged soon after the Suva City Council elections when some defeated Alliance candidates accused Gujerati for not voting Alliance.⁹ They pointed out that the five former NFP persons who stood as Independents, all won as a result of solid Gujeratis support for them. It was pointed out that in the Samabula Ward some 2400 voters had gone through the Alliance shed, 1000 of whom were Ethnic Fijians, yet half of them did not vote for Alliance candidates (Fiji Times, Nov. 26, 1985, p.3). A number of senior party stalwarts defended the Gujeratis and this included Deputy PM David Toganivalu. Ratu Mara, the leader of the Alliance Party also maintained that as a multiracial party, "we do not condemn anyone" (Fiji Sun, Nov. 27, 1985, p.1).

The Alliance Party's image had been tarnished by the unilateral imposition of the wage freeze and its apparent

support for the wealthy as instanced by the bus fare increases. The party also had acquired a reputation for being allegedly corrupt after the 1982 General Election and this was underlined for some by the Marela House incident¹⁰ and the entry of Thai citizens without visas or associated documents to work on development projects (Sunday Times, Oct. 23, 1985 p.1, Fiji Sun, Aug. 2, 1985, p.3). The on-going saga of the government's Volunteer Community Service Scheme as applied to school teachers (being paid \$3000 instead of \$5000) ended with the Permanent Arbitrator deciding in favour of the Fiji Teachers' Confederation. The Government was seen to have breached the 1983 arbitration award by filling substantive teaching positions with volunteers (Fiji Times, Nov. 28, 1985, p.1). The Teachers' Unions made much out of this government 'loss of face' and called upon the Minister and the Permanent Secretary of Education to resign.

Perhaps another matter that undermined the Alliance Party's image was its handling of the Lees workers' three month-long strike (Fiji Sun, Sept. 10, 1985, p.1). As a result of the dismissal of five unionists at the Can Plast factory and 27 union members at the Lees Biscuit/Ice Cream Factory at the Laucala Beach Estate, Lees employees went on strike. After a prolonged delay, the government intervened when 33 Custom Officers went on strike in Nadi in sympathy with their counterparts at the Lautoka Wharf who had refused to handle Lees Trading Company's cargo. The government action was seen as anti-union and anti-worker. Meanwhile Lees closed down its Can Plast Factory after shifting the plant during the strike period to its non-unionised factory in Lautoka. After being on strike for almost four months, the workers were defeated when the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations declared the strike illegal ("Minister Smashes Workers Sacrifice - Raman", Fiji Labour Sentinel, Nov/Dec. 1985, p.1).

Nevertheless, one major feature in favour of the Alliance Party was its continued relationship with the Ethnic Fijian hierarchy. Indeed, some major Western Ethnic Fijian figures, who had left the Alliance to join the Western United Front (WUF) were reportedly showing a willingness to come back to the Alliance fold. This included the Tui Nadi, Ratu Napolioni Dawai and Tui Yakete. The Fiji Sun in its heading of 25 November, "Chiefs warn against Labour" mentioned that the Tui Yakete, Ratu Jone Nadakaibitu, had left the WUF to rejoin Alliance. A long list of chiefs including Tui Ba, Tui Vuda, Tui Naviti, and Tui Yakete pledged their support for the Alliance candidate.¹¹

Of the three Parties contesting the North-Central Indian National Seat, the Fiji Labour Party appeared the strongest contender. It seemed united and had none of the blemishes that plagued the two established parties. Further its victory in the Suva City Council elections gave the image of a party gaining momentum and overtaking the other two parties. However, the FLP's organisational penetration in the North-Central Indian National constituency was suspect.

In brief the prospects of the three parties were unclear at the outset. It appeared that the NFP had been weakened at the top but whether this dissension had spread to the rank and file was uncertain. In the 1982 General Elections, the NFP candidate, Sir Vijay R. Singh had received 15,247 votes, winning by a margin of 5,501 votes. If the NFP managed to get more than half of these votes, it stood a good chance of retaining the seat. The Alliance Party candidate had received 9,746 votes in 1982. With the apparently solid Ethnic Fijian support, the party also had a chance of winning a three-way split. The FLP was the unknown new-comer with a clean sheet and an image of multiracialism. But could it draw former NFP and Alliance votes to its candidate? Certainly not without considerable work in a very large and complex constituency.

The Constituency

The North/Central Indian National Constituency covers a relatively large geographical area incorporating portions of the three provinces of Ba, Magodro and Vuda (see map). It extends from Vitogo River near Lautoka in the west to Vatutavui, on the road to Tavua, in the east. Its southern boundary extends to Keiyasi village in the Navosa province while its northern limits extends out into the sea covering the whole of the Yasawa Group.

In the fertile coastal plains, river valleys, rugged inland areas, and islands that constitute the varied landscape of this constituency reside the 31,000 voters engaged in a range of livelihoods. By far the bulk of the people are involved with the sugar cane industry. Those directly involved are cane farmers and their families, cane cutters, Fiji Sugar Corporation workers, cane-truck drivers and agricultural implement manufacturers. Other recipients of cane revenue are the landlords (including Ethnic Fijian communities with lands leased out for cane cultivation), merchants, bankers, moneylenders, lawyers and doctors.

Most Indo-Fijians, Sino-Fijians and mixed race persons derive incomes from cane related activities. So too do the Ethnic Fijians who own cane land either leased out or cultivated by themselves. Other Ethnic Fijians, particularly in the inland Viti Levu area and in the Yasawa Group are engaged in peasant farming activities, deriving some income from yagona cultivation (in inland areas), fishing (Yasawas), and/or cash cropping and goat farming which supplement their subsistence cultivation.

A detailed occupational structure has not been done for the constituency but relying on our observations the following general outline gives an indication of the socio-economic divisions in the electorate. About 60% of the voters are small peasants utilising between 7-20 acres of land for cane and mixed farming. The bulk of this land is leased from the Native Land Trust Board, the Lands Department, FSC and private landlords. A rural proletariat of landless cane-cutters and casual workers also exists in the constituency. These workers, when employed in the cane harvesting season, earn between \$5 and \$7 a day. Ethnic, cultural and religious differences divide these rural proletariat and peasant classes and underly their political orientations.

In urban and peri-urban areas the number of workers in the electorate increase. Thus in polling station areas such as Vatulaulau in Ba, the proportion of workers employed by FSC and private enterprises comprise more than a third of the population. The same applies to the Rarawai area where the FSC sugar mill is located. In Ba town itself, the majority of the 2324 registered voters are blue and white collar workers residing in suburbs such as Varadoli. Some 600 Gujaratis live in the town area. Also, Tuvakubu near Lautoka has an Ethnic Fijian village and a large low-cost housing estate where workers reside.

Some relatively large capitalists (by local standards) originate and operate in Ba. Maganlal Jiva and Co Ltd are owners of confectionery and curry powder factories in the outskirts of Ba town which have 83 workers. Vinod Patel and Co. Ltd own a corrugated iron factory, a chain link, wire and nail factory employing 41 persons. This company also has a subsidiary called Tile Kingdom with branches in Suva and elsewhere in Fiji which deals in tile, hardware, and timber. R.C. Manubhai and Co. Ltd operate a foam mattress factory, hardware and grocery store and a large timberyard, employing some 50 persons. Among the wholesale and retailers, Maganlal Bros. and Co. Ltd are large operators with 35 workers.

Three large companies also own quarry, earthmoving and transport operations in the Ba area. These are Western Builders and Co. Ltd, T.F.J. Bulldozing and Earthmoving Contractors and A. Jan Quarry Works owned by A. Jan and M.R. Dayal Bulldozing and Quarry Works. The latter also own cane land. These companies rely heavily on contracts from local and central governments and between them hire 90 workers.

In garment manufacturing, Haus Raj Garment and Co. has become a big operation, employing some 215 females in making and selling jeans, trousers and shirts. Fong Lee Ltd, employing 50 workers, remains an important city-landlord, bakery, restaurant and grocery store owner. Ram Padaraths Holdings Ltd owns a large poultry operation (Ram Padarath's Poultry Chicken Ltd), Johal's Supermarket, Padarath's Feed, and the Ba and Tavua Hotels. More than 200 people work for Padarath's enterprises. Kalu Karan Singh, a former NFP MP, owns K.K. Singh Industries Ltd, a large cane farm (more than 80 acres of freehold land), is an agent for anti-rust treatment, and is a landlord. Other capitalists' holdings of significance are C.P. Patel and Co. Ltd (supermarket) with 35 workers, Bhika Bhai and Co. Ltd (supermarket, sweet, meat manufacturer) employing 11 persons, Bombay Trading Ltd (hardware merchants) with 15 workers, Motibhai and Co. Ltd (supermarket, liquor agency and duty-free goods) with 40 workers, Chabildas Bros. and Co. Ltd (joinery, video library), Dominion Wire and Cables Ltd and the landlord and hardware dealer, Ganga Singh and Sons.

Several large capitalist farmers and landlords also reside in the Ba area. These individuals own between 30 to 500 acres of land and have diversified into retail and transportation businesses. A number of them are also money-lenders. Professional people such as lawyers, doctors, accountants and architects originating mainly from cane farming backgrounds (descendants of larger peasants and capitalist farmers) have consolidated themselves, by expanding into cane-holdings, real-estate and/or money-lending. Other individuals have accumulated wealth through construction work, cane transportation, and retailing.

Overall, capitalists (large, medium and small) including large farmers comprise about 10 per cent of the constituency, workers (blue and white collar workers) make up approximately 25 per cent, while the remainder are predominantly small and medium peasants. This peasantry is divided according to the extent of their

reliance on cash-crop (i.e cane) cultivation. Both Ethnic and Indo-Fijians cultivate cane but the latter predominate, and of the 9,000 Ethnic Fijian voters, a good 80 per cent remain in villages with approximately 60 per cent engaged in subsistence activities. However, their dependence on cane land lease revenue and other sources of money income cannot be underestimated.

Ethnic divisions based on an unequal ownership of land, which gives rise to a rentier group that is indigenous and tenants who are Indo-Fijians, and a racial division of labour as outlined above provide the raw materials for racial politics. Racial consciousness derived from a long history of divide and rule by both the colonial and post-colonial state officials, and their local associates make it seem natural to pick on racial factors to gain votes at elections. What needs to be considered is whether the advent of a supposedly class based party changed the nature of political exploitation of ethnic divisions.

Party Tactics

The customary manner of drawing voters to a party in Fiji is by racial or other parochial appeal. Thus the two major political parties usually affirm their 'racial' character by dwelling on issues that reinforce ethnic support for the party. Such issues include land, education, employment and participation in commerce. At another level they publicly condemn racism and assert their commitment to multiracialism. Issues that damage the image of the competing parties are significant as well and are used quite openly. An example of the latter was in 1982 when the Australian Broadcasting Corporations (ABC) "Four Corners" programme sought to show Australian interference in Fiji politics and the collusion by the Alliance Party with foreign agents in order to devise tactics to win the General Elections. The attempt by the NFP-WUF (Western United Front) coalition to discredit the ruling party by using this programme backfired when the Alliance leader claimed that its reference to chiefs "clubbing and eating their way to power" was a slur against all Fijians.

From the campaigning and electioneering tactics of the major parties in December 1985 it is apparent that the advent of the FLP made little impact on the racial character of their attempts to woo voters. This was especially true of the National Federation Party.

The NFP Strategy

The NFP held pocket meetings two months before the election date. It attempted to utilise its dormant local level cadres, the wealthier farmers, landlords, farmer-shopkeepers and cane sardars. The fact that James Shankar Singh was from Ba and well-known in the Indo-Fijian and Ethnic Fijian communities, both facilitated the campaign and impeded it. Many NFP voters felt that the selection of a former Alliance person was not in their interests. Others, whose loyalty to the NFP remained unshaken took the view of the NFP leadership that James Singh had a long experience in politics and would usefully serve the NFP.

James Shankar Singh dwelled on the errors committed by the Alliance government, picking on anecdotes from his period as a Minister in the Alliance Cabinet. Other leaders particularly Mr S.M. Koya, stressed the long association of NFP with the cane farmers - especially "Indian" cane farmers. The Denning Award in 1970 and the activities leading towards it were recounted. The NFP was equated with cane farmers. Moreover, it was proclaimed that NFP was an "Indian" party, serving Indian interests. Apparent instances of racial discrimination, as for example the case of Dr Bhupendra Pathik, the former Principal of the Fiji School of Medicine, who was replaced by a Rotuman (regarded as a "Fijian"), were highlighted. The Alliance government was obviously "anti-Indian" but what about Dr Bavadra and Mahendra Chaudhry? What were they? Were they not senior officials of the Fiji Public Service Association? Why were they silent? While James Shankar Singh was portrayed as a champion of cane farmers, one who preferred to confront the Prime Minister and resign rather than urge farmers to sign the cane contract, the FLP was presented as a party with no farmers on its executive and with no policies for farmers in their initial campaign manifestos.

While the NFP candidate spoke about Alliance government shortcomings and failures, other NFP stalwarts attacked the FLP. It was stressed that FLP was not a farmers' party and that it was anti-farmers. It was not an "Indian" party but a party which pandered to "Fijians" as could be seen by the number of the Ethnic Fijians in its leadership. It was a communist party, or a party that served the interests of established civil servants and white collar workers. A Fiji Sun article, published a few days before the actual formation of the FLP, which speculated on FLP policy towards freehold lands that were originally

acquired through deception, was circulated widely among the voters. NFP activists took the cue from Mr Sarda Nand, NFP MP, and stressed the FLP's "anti-Indian" nature in this regard, the underlying message being that FLP was out to deprive Indo-Fijians of their lands.

Another strategy adopted by NFP was to emphasise that NFP was responsible for the amicable settlement between the representatives of the 'racial groups' at independence which made independence possible. The NFP had not sold the "Indians" down the drain. The NFP and Alliance had worked to give Fiji stability. This stability was now threatened by a FLP formed by selfish bureaucrats who had filled their pockets by 'automatic increments' and particularly by the Nicol and Hurst award at a time when farmers were suffering from cyclones and the recession. To vote Labour meant to vote for strikes, industrial troubles, labour unrest, instability and bloodshed. It was also noted that the FLP had no farmer or Muslim as Vice President. As for the inter-factionalism within the NFP, it was maintained that the differences were among the leaders and not the rank and file. The analogy was drawn with squabbles in a household. "Why run away from the household that brought you up? Why destroy the house that made you what you are?" were the questions that NFP campaigners asked.

It was amusing to note that the NFP continued to use its old 1982 NFP-WUF banners, one of which, found in all polling stations read "Time for a Change. Vote for Dynamic, Progressive and Effective Team". Clearly this was out of place in the 1985 by-election.

The Alliance Campaign

Uday Singh, the Alliance candidate, claimed that he had begun campaigning four months before the election week. As the candidate resident in the Ba area for a long time as well as being associated with and a member of several local bodies, both government and non-governmental, Mr Singh was in a unique position among the candidates to mobilise support in the constituency. This was done by strengthening Alliance polling station committees as well as by adopting other strategies discussed below.

At a wider level (no doubt with the by-election in mind) the Alliance budget for the New Year offered a number of incentives for voters to think Alliance. This

included a five year tax exemption for cane farmers. The move towards more regressive indirect taxation also pleased bigger income earners, larger farmers and shopkeepers (Fiji Sun, Fiji Times, Nov. 9, 1985).

The Alliance Party campaign stressed that Uday Singh was a 'local' Ba man who had done 'so much' for the community. Votes were sought for him in recognition of his past services and his continued leadership. His role in social, educational and religious organisations was stressed. At the time of the election he was Chairman of the Ba Rural Local Authority, the Ba Advisory Council and the Ba/Tavua Drainage Board and President of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji. In an interview he claimed, "I don't have to look or hunt for people. I know who the important people are in various settlements and villages". ('Uday Singh - Lord of the Manor', Fiji Times, Dec. 6, 1985, p.7). He was also manager of several schools. At another level, the Alliance government was credited with having given Fiji peace and prosperity. Ratu Mara was featured as the leader who had most guided Fiji in the post-independence era giving it stability. Since Uday Singh was supported by him, others should follow the Alliance leader's example. A campaign posture to this effect was circulated with a large photograph of Ratu Mara and a smaller one of Mr Singh. The banner message outside Alliance sheds also akin to the 1982 campaign cry, read "Keep Fiji in Safe Hands".

In more than 40 'pocket meetings' Uday Singh and other Alliance campaigners sent the message of the long standing and reliable leadership of the Alliance Party. Depending on the needs of the locality, promises were made about Alliance plans to provide largess for them. It was reported in the Sunday Times (Nov. 11, 1985, p.3) that in a meeting at Sorokoba village in Ba of about 600 Alliance delegates and supporters, Ratu Mara underlined some of the governing party's intentions for the constituency. Long standing Ba people's concerns such as the upgrading of Ba bridge from a one way to a two-way bridge (\$3 million), water supply (\$2.3 million) and a hospital (\$1 million) to serve the area were promised. In all the government envisaged spending \$60 million in the constituency, with \$50 million being invested in a joint-venture company in Drasa. Lautoka for pine processing. A further \$600,000 was to be spent on the Ba Technical Centre. A number of roads were to be upgraded and the Balevuto nursing station extended.

In terms of specific local area actions, the Alliance Party promised to build five houses through the Hurricane Relief Fund as well as provide Sorokoba with telephone.

In Naiaga village, \$15,000 was promised for the construction of a seawall. In Benai, Karavi and Navoli, the Alliance candidate in his capacity as Chairman of the Rural Local Authority promised to supply piped water.

The Alliance Party's campaign strategy, therefore, exhibited a party in control, one that was capable of bringing to the people what they needed. If the latter voted for the party candidate then it was likely that their area would receive the government's attention. Alliance campaigners emphasised the divisions within the NFP and the FLP's immaturity. It was asked what one FLP MP could do when 24 NFP-WUF MPs were unable to do very much.

The party also attempted to keep its Ethnic Fijian support by specific racial appeals in radio broadcasts. In a paternalistic message, the Party maintained that under the Alliance, all "races" and cultures were respected whereas by calling everyone 'Fijian' as advocated by FLP, the Fijians would lose their culture and identity. The broadcast stated that the FLP had divided and weakened the trade union movement by bringing politics into FTUC. "Will the Labour Party divide the country, and our communities in the same way it has divided the unions?" the broadcast asked.

The FLP was labelled as a party of well-off town dwellers who did not understand rural problems. An FTUC kindergarten was said to be charging \$15.00 a week, an amount that ordinary citizens could not afford. In contrast the Alliance was presented a party of the "poorer sections of society". It had improved living standards, built new roads, installed water supplies and electricity.

The broadcast claimed that FLP was like the Flower Faction of the NFP and enjoyed the support of former Flower Faction supporters.¹² In this regard the FLP was just like NFP, an "Indian Party". The teachers strike earlier in the year was said to have caused suffering among children. The strike had been supported by labour leaders. The broadcast also attacked the FLP's opposition to the Volunteer Teachers Scheme saying that the scheme had provided jobs but the FLP had selfishly wanted only union members to teach.

Also questioned was the FLP's platform to democratise the Native Land Trust Board. Was the FLP against chiefs and traditional leadership in society? The Alliance Party denied that the FLP had any significant Ethnic Fijian support and that claims of Fijian support by the party were exaggerated to boost its campaign. "There

is no escaping the fact that to many people the Labour Party is just a substitute for the Flower Faction of the NFP, and the NFP had never had any attraction for Fijians" (Fijian Broadcast - Fijian Audience, Mimeo).

The presence of Ratu Mara in the Ba area and subsequently at most of the polling stations strengthened Alliance Party support. The shop-to-shop lobbying in Ba town by the Gujerati business magnate, Mahendra Motibhai and Deputy Prime Minister, Ratu David Toganivalu, must certainly have paid dividends in votes.

The FLP Tactics

Dr Timoci Bavadra (President, FLP) and Mr Krishna Dutt (General Secretary) divided up the electorate for campaign purposes. Bavadra focused primarily in the inland Viti Levu area and on the Yasawas. Dutt concentrated on the Ba-Lautoka area with the candidate Mahendra Chaudry.

The FLP issued a by-election manifesto in the three languages in which was laid out its views on a number of contemporary topics. The FLP set out to fight the election on issues and not race. On the sugar industry and its present crisis FLP maintained that there should be a shift from the present 70:30 division of sugar proceeds between the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) and the growers to a 80:20 allocation in favour of the latter; the more attempts be made to secure long-term arrangements of the kind with EEC, the USA and Malaysia, and that farm quotas be based on guaranteed and world market prices. Sugar cane prices should be fixed at a level not less than 20% above production cost. The FLP also called for interest free loans for weedicides, drain-clearance and agricultural equipment. The Party promised that all problems in the sugar industry including production and marketing bungles would be publicised. It maintained that there was a need for a MP well-versed in the difficulties confronted by farmers. The FLP further argued that the Sugar Cane Growers Council and the Sugar Cane Experimental Station be funded from the budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Primary Industries rather than by cane-farmers.

On the matter of corruption, the manifesto referred to the Fiji Times editorial of August 28 1985, which stated that corruption was growing and becoming widespread. It promised that the FLP would make known all forms of corruption, push for an anti-corruption law,

and work towards clean government. The FLP maintained that the wage freeze unilaterally imposed by the government was a fiasco. There had been no price freeze. Hence, while wage-earners were suffering, the rich were getting richer. On unemployment, the manifesto noted that by the government's own confession at the National Economic Summit (NES) unemployment had increased to 10%. Government had failed to create the 8,000 jobs it had promised when imposing the freeze. The condition of the unemployed and the poorly paid was of grave concern to FLP. The manifesto declared that FLP "believes in full and meaningful employment for all the people".

The FLP in its platform also questioned the absence of pension/benefit schemes for farmers, the casually employed, and those suffering unemployment. It noted that the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) did not cater for farmers and advocated that all who contributed to the economy should be covered by this pension scheme. The manifestos decried the failure of parliamentarians to legislate measures for old age social security. It argued that MPs were self-satisfied because the present scheme allowed a number of them a high 24% (17% government, 7% individual members) contribution to FNPF. Thus the tax payers were subsidising these already privileged elements in society. The Prime Minister received \$8,400 a year in FNPF contributions, of which tax-payers were paying \$6,000. The FLP promised to eliminate favoured treatment and work towards social security for the poor and the under-privileged.

Under the heading of hospital care, it was noted that certain prominent Fiji citizens were going abroad to New Zealand, Australia and China for medical treatment when health services in Fiji were deteriorating. The tax payers and the poorer sections of the community had to pay for these visits but faced prospects of poor medical services themselves. The FLP manifesto maintained the health was important for both the poor and the rich and proper facilities should be made available to all Fiji nationals irrespective of their wealth. It also questioned the long delay in establishing a hospital in Ba.

Other issues that the manifesto commented on were: a nuclear free Pacific, television, education and industrial relations. The FLP promised to strengthen efforts to end nuclear tests, nuclear waste dumping and visits by nuclear powered and/or weapons carrying vessels to Fiji. On the television deal between Fiji government and the operators of Channel Nine TV in Australia, the FLP questioned the secrecy surrounding the deal as well as the hurry in establishing a station in Fiji. The FLP called for a full

and Frank disclosure of all facts relating to the Channel Nine deal. It maintained that there was a need to reopen the tender before deciding to grant a licence to operate Television to any company. It accused the Alliance Government of giving TV rights to this company because it promised to establish a station before 1987. Modern gadgets would enable the "ageing Alliance government" to campaign from home. The FLP also queried the giving of 80 per cent shares in this important media to the foreign company.

The FLP's manifesto called for an end to the volunteer scheme for teachers and characterised Government's decision-making as authoritarian and arrogant. A long teachers' strike and the alienation of school committees, teachers and parents had resulted from this attitude. The FLP stated that education should be made available to all and that it should not become "too burdensome for the society". On industrial relations, the Party maintained that the Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC), had in the national interest, sacrificed the needs of poor workers so that the Tripartite Forum could be a harmonious organ for industrial management through the 'Pacific Way' of dialogue between Government, workers and employers. FLP demanded the strengthening of the Forum in order to resolve industrial disputes. It advocated the "immediate enactment of the manufacturing industry wages council in order to stop unprotected women workers from exploitation".

Some Controversies and Telling-Tactics

A number of issues were thrown-up during the campaign and the parties each attempted to gain votes out of the embarrassment that was caused to their opponents. In the strategy of the NFP, a campaign was initiated to expose the FLP, as an anti-farmers' party, particularly with regard to its land policy. A Fiji Sun article of 4 July was used to claim that "Indians" were going to lose their leases and freehold land once FLP came to power. The FLP prepared statements in Hindi to counter this accusation.

The FLP candidate, Chaudhry, was accused of having no record of serving farmers. This was quite effective because cane-farmers in this constituency were not members of the National Farmers Union of which Chaudhry was General Secretary.

The NFP also capitalised on a rumour that Uday Singh had squashed a photo of his brother under his foot.

This story was spread rapidly in the constituency as an example of Uday's ingratitude and disrespect. "How could people vote for a person who has no respect for his own elder brother after all he had done for him?" asked NFP activists.

The FLP candidate, Chaudhry claimed that the Alliance Government had made a secret and quick deal with Publishing and Broadcasting Ltd, owners of Channel Nine TV in Australia in a bid to win the 1987 General Election. Instead of waiting for other offers, the Alliance government had precipitated a decision in favour of this company because of its readiness to introduce TV before the 1987 General Election. "It is common knowledge that the ageing Alliance needs to set up modern gadgets by 1987, to be able to campaign from home using the television rather than getting to the people." A statement from the Ministry of Information denied that this was the case. It was pointed out that feasibility studies were submitted by the owners of Channel Nine and South Pacific TV Ltd, a local group. Both propositions had been studied by government officials and the foreign company was found to be more acceptable. According to the government, the larger shareholding by the company commented on by the FLP (Fiji Times, Dec. 3, p.2).

Alliance campaigners accused the FLP of lying to voters by claiming that it could arrange working visas to New Zealand because there was a Labour Government there. They asked if everyone could go to New Zealand why are people still around? "Why is the Labour Party campaigning in Fiji when it is going to send Fiji people overseas?"

FLP claimed that the Alliance had made a mess of the sugar deals with China and Japan. The growers had to pay the bulk of the indemnity of \$800,000 to Japan for Fiji's failure to supply that country sugar. The China-deal had been negotiated at below the world market prices.

These attacks on each other and the different party approaches to the voters provided some interesting news for the latter. But how did the voters perceive the election and the actions of the three parties?

Voter Attitudes

48 of the 110 persons (80 Indo-Fijians, 25 Ethnic Fijians, 5 General Electors) that the research team spoke to indicated that they were going to vote FLP, 31 said

that they were going to vote Alliance and 16 chose to remain with NFP (see table). The remaining 15 persons were indifferent to the by-election. Many of these interviewees - adult males claiming to speak on behalf of the females in their families.¹³

The last category provided different responses for their refusal to vote for any political party. Thus one Indo-Fijian respondent at Varadoli-Ba, a Muslim carpenter in his mid-40s speaking for himself and his family of five, stated that he had been traditionally an NFP man. The NFP had been a party for the farmers and in 1982 Koya and Reddy together gave Fiji the possibility of another government. This did not happen and instead of working for the betterment of the voters, the NFP leaders now fought among themselves. In the by-election the respondent said,

I won't vote for anyone. All the politicians are the same. They come and make promises. Once they win the election they never come to the constituency again. They just care for their stomachs. Look at what Sir Vijay did. He came, won and then resigned to get more money. He came in 1982 to help the people! James will do the same thing. Uday Singh does not talk to all the people at other times but when election approaches he visits house to house. If he wins, we will hardly see him. He can't talk here, how will he talk in Parliament. Chaudhry is very new, he lives in Suva, if he wins, I will see him again in 1987 and not before then. So vote of no confidence.

This view was again manifested by a group of Indo-Fijian men who were related to each other in Lovu, Lautoka comprising three 'younger men' between 30-45 years and three older men between 50-70 years. These men spoke on behalf of their spouses and adult sons and daughters. They had suffered badly in the three cyclones that had struck Fiji early in the year. One family of ten persons (the parents and eight children) were still living in a hurricane relief tent. They were very bitter about the lack of support from the District Office and the Welfare Department. They complained that in the last elections they had voted NFP and had seen Sir Vijay get in. Instead of serving the people, particularly, those like themselves, this politician had resigned to join the Sugar Cane Council where there was more money to make. "What is the use of voting for politicians. They take votes and are not seen again. Now there is a Labour Party - they are talking too much. They say they speak

for the poor and the down trodden but are they poor? What have they done for the people? They are the same". This view expressed by one of the younger men was supported by the others. They firmly indicated that they were not going to vote.

TABLE 1 THE SAMPLE

<u>Survey Sample</u>		<u>Constituency Electorate</u>	
Indo Fijians	80	Indo Fijians	21,771 69%
Ethnic Fijians	25	Ethnic Fijians	9,386 30%
General		General	
Electors	5	Electors	292 10%
	<u>110 Total</u>		<u>31,049 Total</u>

Party Support from Sample

Alliance Party	31	16 Indo Fijians
National Federation Party	16	14 Ethnic Fijians
		1 General Elector
Fiji Labour Party	48	13 Indo Fijians
		3 Ethnic Fijians
		0 General Elector
		38 Indo Fijians
		7 Ethnic Fijians
		4 General Electors

Voters' Shifts

NFP to Alliance	10	2 Ethnic Fijians
		8 Indo Fijians
NFP to FLP	37	2 Ethnic Fijians
		34 Indo Fijians
Alliance to FLP	8	1 General Elector
		2 Ethnic Fijians
		3 Indo Fijians
		3 General Electors

Eight out of 16 Indo Fijian voters who voted for Alliance Party moved from NFP; 34 out of 37 Indo-Fijians who voted FLP came from NFP; overall, therefore NFP lost 50% of its voters in the sample.

Alliance Party lost three out of its five General Electors to FLP, a loss of 60% in the sample. Alliance Party's loss of two Ethnic Fijians and three Indo Fijians is of little significance in the sample.

Three other persons, two Indo-Fijians and one Ethnic Fijian declared that as this was not a general election, there was no real need to vote. The government will not be changed. They were going to wait for eighteen months when the main elections are held. Another male interviewee stated that nothing will change, "It is no use voting."

Those persons who showed a preference for the National Federation Party were all old NFP supporters who reaffirmed their loyalty to the Party. An Indo-Fijian in his early 60s, a Muslim, maintained that NFP had always been a farmers' party. He had been a farmer since he was born and had supported the NFP for twenty years and saw no reason for changing. The NFP was a party with lawyers knowledgeable on such matters as land, cane contracts and cane prices which are important for the farming community. The squabbles were among the leaders not the supporters of NFP. As a traditional NFP man he was going to vote NFP. This person was a member of the local Rural Advisory Board and he spoke on behalf of his family comprising his wife, two adult sons, their wives and an adult unmarried daughter. His sons showed interest in the Fiji Labour Party but it is not known if they voted FLP.

A Gujerati respondent stated that he had supported NFP since its inception and felt no reason to change his alignment. His loyalty to NFP outweighed the appeal of the Alliance Party and he expressed his distrust of the FLP.

Three other Indo-Fijian males argued that NFP was an "Indian" party, the destruction of which will result in all sorts of dangers for "Indians". These were Mr Koya's supporters and were all in their mid-thirties. They said that there is no way that they would allow NFP to be destroyed by a party that was "born only yesterday" (ie FLP). Two other Indo-Fijians at the polling stations in Tavakubu told the researcher that "all the traitors to the party will get a slap in the face when the by-election is over". A respondent in Veisaru, Ba, stated that he knew that NFP leaders were fighting among themselves but "why run away from the house? Why destroy it? Let us work to build it up again".

The Ethnic Fijian males in their 40s who were actively campaigning for the NFP stated that they were traditional NFP supporters and regarded James Shankar Singh as a "good man and a relative". They added that as they were cane farmers the NFP was their party.

Another Ethnic Fijian male said that the Alliance party was for the rich people and as a farmer he was supporting the NFP.

Of the 25 ethnic Fijians interviewed, 15 showed a clear preference for the Alliance Party. Twelve Ethnic Fijian voters in their comments on why they supported this party gave reasons such as: "the Alliance is for the 'Fijians'; it protects our land; it has provided roads, water supply, electricity, telephone and hurricane relief houses after the cyclones". Three other Ethnic Fijian respondents stated that the Alliance had given Fiji stability and had maintained peace and harmony between the races, between 'Indians' and 'Fijians'.

Eight Indo-Fijians who expressed their support for the Alliance Party candidate in the by-election said that this party had given Fiji peace and stability. Two Sikh males (70 years and 40 years) and a female (65 years) from Naroku, Ba, said that Uday Singh was a local person who had helped Sikhs to settle in the area. He had assisted in getting rations and relief supplies after the two major cyclones and he did not differentiate rich from the poor. These respondents who were wealthier cane farmers also said that James Singh and Chaudhry were not local people, and who, on getting the votes, would leave for Suva.

A Muslim male respondent (51 years) said that he was voting for the Alliance Party because

It had ruled Fiji for 15 years and though conditions have worsened, this is a world-wide trend so nothing much can happen. Labour is for young people and at present we cannot see much provision for the Muslim community. Uday is a local man also. We know him personally; he lives here.

Another Muslim taxi-driver remarked that there were two Muslim ministers in the Alliance government but Koya, a Muslim, was being attacked in the NFP and there were no Muslims on the executive of the FLP.

Supporting the Alliance Party, a Gujerati garment factory and retail shop owner in Ba town stated that,

I will vote for Alliance as it has provisions to help the business sector well. It has been ruling for fifteen years and is an experienced party. I won't vote for Labour as it is mainly made of trade [their] unionists who are

inexperienced in the field of politics and policies won't benefit the business sector. It is very anti-business and the Labour Party does not have any Gujarati vice-president.

A mixed-race person (part-European) in Veisaru told the researchers that Ratu Mara had given the best leadership that Fiji could possibly have. He said that the Fiji Labour Party was saying to people that they could get jobs if "they voted for it". He said that FLP were "a bunch of liars who pretended that they could solve Fiji's problems when even the PM after 15 years could not solve them".

Those respondents who indicated that they were going to vote for Labour included seven Ethnic Fijians, four mixed-race persons (3 part-Europeans and one part-Chinese), and 37 Indo-Indians. The latter were comprised largely of 'North Indian' Hindus (20), 'South Indian' Hindus (13) and Muslims (4). Two of the Ethnic Fijian respondents, both male villagers and casual workers in their late 30s from Drasa, Lautoka, said that their reason for supporting the FLP was that neither the Alliance nor the NFP had done much to improve the quality of life in their area. "Fifteen years have been a long time for the Alliance to rule", they said, and that "it was time for a change". They felt that the FLP should be given a try. Three other Ethnic Fijian males at Tavakubu, Lautoka went along with an Indo-Fijian 'spokeman's' view that they were "labouring people, we must support Labour Party". A 43 year old Ethnic Fijian from Sasa, Ba said,

People want a change and it is time to see a new party come up. Let us see what they have to offer. Prices are going up and wages remain the same. People are facing hard time: The Alliance comes up only to get votes and then forgets about the people. No one support NFP because it is down the drain.

Indo-Fijians who supported the FLP did so predominantly (30 out of 37) because they were 'fed-up' with the internal factionalism in the NFP. They were concerned that the NFP had proved to be an ineffective Opposition. About 50% of these interviewees (16) said that NFP leader, Koya, should resign for the good of the NFP. Ten respondents remarked that they had voted Vijay R. Singh but he had left the voters for a better deal. They also questioned the advisability of getting ex-Alliance people to stand on NFP tickets.

Twenty of the Indo-Fijians interviewed also saw themselves as victims of government policies in terms of the hurricane relief ration allocations, aid for reconstruction of damaged houses, increased bus fares and in education and employment. The NFP was seen as colluding with government or being ineffective. They said that they had received no 'faidā' (returns/ benefits) from voting NFP in the past. Thus the bulk of the Indo-Fijian respondents expressed a sense of frustration with the government and the opposition as their reason for seeking an alternative in the FLP. Being poor farmers or workers was secondary.

It is noteworthy that only seven Indo-Fijians out of 37 gave clear 'class' reasons for voting FLP. Four of these respondents maintained that they were 'mazardur' (workers) whose interests were going to be protected by a Labour Party. They complained about rising prices without any parallel increase in their wages. One 35 year old, unemployed 'South Indian' typifies the reaction of these respondents.

Labour Party looks as the only party which will work for the common people. I won't vote for Alliance as it is for rich people like Punja and Motibhai. Its policies have hit me very badly. The rise in prices and wage freeze and unemployment has worsened conditions. I have four children. All go to school, I face a lot of problems. I think Labour is the only party which will benefit me and is the only hope to topple the Alliance. The NFP is for the rich too, you can see the fat lawyers and businessmen in it. NFP people and Alliance only come to us when election approaches. Labour is very multiracial and the racial barriers might be broken if this party came more into the forefront. It is the only party which might hold something better for the coming generation.

The three farmers giving a class explanation described the low sugar cane returns this year coupled with increasing prices for their reasons for supporting the FLP. They said that farmers were 'labour' (ie. labourer) and therefore it was only logical for them to vote for FLP. One of them spoke at length on how the costs of sharps, bus fares and basic items such as matches, cigarettes, kerosene and clothes had gone up. He said demands from the schools for various fundraising activities had also eroded the low incomes of farmers. He also complained about government policy that restricted the

importation of onions. Local onions were expensive and of poor quality taste-wise and hard to keep.

The four mixed race persons (three males and one female) categorised as General Electors by the State seemed most aware of their class position. In all the replies from the different ethnic categories, their responses showed clearly 'class-considerations' as the primary reason for voting FLP. Thus one of the male interviewees, a 29 years old boilmaker, fitter and machinist said:

It is for the workers and I am a worker also. The Alliance hasn't solved the main problems which are prevalent in the society today. The rise in prices and wage freeze has hit me badly. Labour looks as a party which will come with something new. The exploitation done by business people, especially Gujaratis is bad for the country. We want social justice. What alternative is there? NFP can't run their own party, how can they run the nation? The leadership crises will always be there. It has too many lawyers. Labour will work for the national interest for all and racism will be diminished if they came to power.

The female interviewee a 26 years old, a housewife and part-time sales agent living in the FSC compound, Rarawai, Ba, said that her family lived on the wages of her husband and whatever money she made. It was in her interest to vote Labour. She stated:

There is very high level of corruption. Only Labour is seen as an alternative to solve some of the problems of unemployment and wage freeze. It will also work for social justice and social welfare. It will also be better for the younger people. It is very multiracial and will provide the best opposition in the House. The NFP is divided once more and from 1982 to 1985 hasn't really brought the Alliance to its toes. It is now clear to the general public that Alliance and NFP are for the rich people only.

Shifts in Voting Patterns

From our discussions and interviews with voters in the North-Central Indian National Constituency it was apparent that NFP was losing significant numbers of votes to the FLP (see table 1). In contrast the shift from the

Alliance Party into the FLP fold was not as marked. There were indeed individuals, some of them formerly active workers of the Alliance Party in the FLP but this seemed to have been balanced to a certain extent by the shift of some NFP supporters to the Alliance.

From our random sample of 110 persons, 10 had moved from the NFP to the Alliance Party. These included 2 Ethnic Fijians and 8 Indo-Fijians. The former from Nawarua, Ba, had voted for the NFP/WUF Coalition in the 1982 General Elections, on the grounds that the Alliance had become a party for Lauans and not for Fijians. They had now shifted back to the Alliance because of the dissaray in the NFP and because the WUF had not been involved in the campaign. They felt that the Alliance Party had helped them after the cyclones and that the FLP was too new.

Those eight Indo-Fijians who shifted their support from the NFP to the Alliance explained their change in terms of the in-fighting in NFP. Thus the Muslim respondent from Wallailai, Ba, who had voted NFP-WUF in 1982 said that the internal bickering in NFP coupled with "the close relations" of the Alliance Party "with the Muslim community" led him to support the latter party. A 30 year old Gujarati shopkeeper said that in 1982 he had voted NFP-WUF as the NFP was always been a party for Gujaratis and its coalition with WUF made it multiracial but now there was no point in voting NFP. He was voting Alliance because Uday Singh was a local person and a J.P. who would sign papers for free. He wanted Uday Singh to get a seat because of his service and because he was a religious man. Another Gujarati from Ba town, the garment manufacturer, said that NFP was no longer a party for Gujaratis and his business interests decided him in favour of Alliance.

Of the 48 individuals who indicated that they intended to vote for the FLP candidate, all had voted for the other two parties previously. The bulk of them, however, had been NFP supporters. Thirty-seven out of the 48 had previously voted for NFP. Of the 37 Indo-Fijians, 34 had supported the NFP and were dismayed by the internal leadership problems of the NFP, they were now going to vote for FLP. It was also apparent that a significant proportion of them (20) had been supporters of the 'Flower Faction' and Mr Jai Ram Reddy.

Two ethnic Fijians moved from NFP-WUF coalition to the Fiji Labour Party because of the problems within NFP. One mixed race person who had voted for the NFP before was intending to vote Labour this time.

Eight persons indicated that they moved their support from the Alliance Party to the FLP. They included two Ethnic Fijians, three General Electors and three Indo-Fijians. Their reasons were dissatisfaction with the Alliance's handling of the current economic crisis, rising prices and the imposition of the wage freeze, and corruption. They also explained that as workers and farmers they supported the new party. On the basis of the responses during the interviews a victory by the FLP was a possibility, but the size of the sample and the complexity of the constituency indicated that caution was needed in making any prediction. The actual behaviour of voters on polling days had to be observed to verify the interview data.

Polling

Voting began on 11 of December and continued till 14 December and polling took place on various days during this period in 31 different stations. The research team visited the inland areas of Magodro up to Bukuya station a day before the election as this place was quite far. Reports from Bukuya indicated that there was a split among the voters there. Casual conversation with five villagers indicated this to be the case.

Nineteen polling stations out of the 31 were visited, all of those were in the mainland. Inland polling stations and those in the Yasawas were not observed. A survey of the polling sheds of each political party in the polling stations visited is shown in the following table indicating the numbers present. The table also lists the registered voters and their ethnicity (see Table 2).

Our observations at the polling station sheds highlighted six significant features. These were (1) the solidarity shown by Ethnic Fijian persons (especially older people from the village(s) nearby) to the Alliance Party; (2) the presence of a small but active NFP group in most polling stations visited; (3) the degree to which the FLP had established local level party machinery to coordinate polling activities; (4) the absence of any overt hostility between the parties workers (with perhaps one exception);¹⁴ (5) the failure of the FLP to portray its multiracial image in a number of the stations; and (6), the efficient organisation of transport by all the parties.

Where polling stations were near a village, the Alliance Party shed was invariably filled by Ethnic Fijian supporters. In places such as Karawai and Vadravadra,

supporters sat patiently outside the sheds. The consumption of yaqona, in some instances accompanied by singing, gave polling day a festive atmosphere.

Surprisingly enough, significant numbers of Ethnic Fijians also appeared in the NFP sheds in three polling stations. They added to the number of staunch NFP loyalists who, in many cases, aware that their party was not doing well, carried on regardless. In Veisaru, Vadravadra and Nailaga, Ethnic Fijians equalled the number of Indo-Fijians in the NFP sheds. A few Ethnic Fijians were also present at the NFP shed in the Ba town station. The presence of these Ethnic Fijian supporters indicated that the NFP had some indigenous Fijian support as a party.

In Sorokoba village, a division over the appointment of the Tui Ba sharpened the lines between the Alliance and NFP supporters. Ratu Sakiusa Naitiku, the Tui Ba, and his supporters backed the Alliance candidate. Opposing him was Filimone Naliva whose sympathisers apparently drew 25% of the village votes to the NFP.

While the FLP showed that it had a multiracial following in a number of stations, including Ba town, Tavakubu, Vitogo and Koronubu, in several other stations such as Rarawai, Vadravadra, Nailaga, Vatuલાu and Veisaru, FLP seemed more 'racial' than the NFP. Large numbers of Indo-Fijians were present but only a few if any Ethnic Fijians could be seen in these sheds. (As the researchers were not able to visit the inland areas and the Yasawas where stations were for almost exclusively Ethnic Fijian voters, no impression of the support for the parties could be gained).

The By-election Results

On the basis of the voter turn out (see Table 3), the number of people going through the sheds of particular parties, the ethnicity of registered voters in station areas and from discussions with party-activists, the researchers had concluded a narrow victory for the FLP over the Alliance Party, with the NFP lagging behind (Fiji Times, Dec. 14 1985).

As it turned out this prediction was erroneous. The NFP did get the lowest votes, 5003 plus 84 informal votes, a total of 5087 votes but Alliance's Uday Singh received 7885 votes plus 146 informal votes, thereby gaining an overall total of 8031 votes. Mahendra Chaudhry received 7644 votes and 121 informal votes, a total of 7772 votes.

TABLE 2

POLLING STATIONS SURVEY

	Indo- ^S Fijian	Ethnic- ^S Fijian	Total ^S	No. of sheds			Comments
				AP ^U	NFP	FLP	
Ba Town	2311	143	2454	35	80	40	All had mixtures of ethnic categories, NFP predominantly IF.
Bukama	-	203	203		Not visited		
Bukuya	4	783	787		Not visited		
Drasa	1617	608	2225	50	30	35	AP mixed but mainly EF. NFP, IF, FLP mixed but mainly IF.
Karavi	1254	-	1254	15	30	30	All IF.
Kese	-	828	828		Not visited		AP mixed but predominantly EF. NFP IF. FLP mixed but predominantly IF.
Koronobu	298	103	401	10	15	25	AP mixed but mainly EF, NFP IF. FLP mixed but EF in background.
Lovu	1636	310	1946	25	40	40	
Mabukeru	-	158	158		Not visited		
Macula	-	405	405		Not visited		
Naibalebale	-	145	145		Not visited		
Nailaga	851	440	1291	60	15	5	AP mixed, mainly EF. NFP mixed, FLP IF.
Namata	-	112	112		Not visited		
Nanuku	-	317	317	5	40	20	All IF.
Nukuloa	2894	461	3355	80	40	25	All mixed mainly IF; NFP IF. FLP mixed but mainly IF.
Nasomolevu	-	206	206		Not visited		
Navala	-	143	143		Not visited		
Navoli	577	12	579	15	30	20	AP IF. NFP IF. FLP IF.
Qerelevu	409	15	424	10	20	35	AP mixed, FLP mixed. NFP IF.
Parawai	961	384	1345	50	15	35	AP mixed but mainly EF and GE with few IF. FLP IF and GE, NFP IF.
Tavakubu	1203	460	1603	20	30	60	AP mixed, NFP IF. FLP mixed.
Tuvu	714	117	831	20	20	30	All mixed but mainly EF. NFP IF. FLP IF.
Vadravadra	862	964	1826	120	80	20	AP mixed, mainly EF, NFP mixed, FLP mixed but mainly IF.
Vaqa	1278	14	1292	20	83	40	AP mixed, NFP IF. FLP IF.
Vatulaulau	914	222	1136	50	35	35	AP mixed, mainly EF; NFP IF. FLP mixed mainly IF.
Weisaru	824	315	1139	40	26	25	AP mixed, NFP mixed. FLP IF.
Vitogo	863	530	1493	35	31	27	AP mixed, mainly EF. NFP IF. FLP mixed, mainly IF.
Wuaki	-	232	232		Not visited		
Yaqeta	-	204	204		Not visited		
Yalalevu	1845	345	2190	35	35	35	AP mixed, NFP IF. FLP mainly IF.
Yalobi	-	456	456		Not visited		
Yasauni-rara	-	457	457		Not visited		

^S figures in columns 1, 2 and 3 were provided by the Elections Office.

^U AP = Alliance Party

IF = Indo-Fijians

EF = Ethnic Fijians

GE = General Electors

TABLE 3: REGISTERED VOTERS AND VOTER TURN-OUT

	Fijian	Indian	General	Total	Voter Turn- Out
Bukuya	783	4	Nil	787	434
Navala/ Nadrugu	143	N	1	144	106
Koronubuu	103	298	1	402	278
Nanuku	317	N	N	317	228
Navoli	2	577	N	579	436
Qerelevu	15	409	N	424	339
Yatulaulau	222	914	7	1143	823
Karavi	N	1254	N	1254	884
Nailaga	440	813	1	1254	898
Yalalevu	345	1845	62	2252	1475
Weisaru	205	951	N	1158	730
Nukuloa	461	2894	8	3363	2414
Yadravadra	964	868	11	1843	1207
Yaqia	14	1238	N	1252	924
Rarawai	384	961	81	1426	1005
Ba Town	143	2311	42	2496	1770
Drasa	608	1617	8	2233	1501
Tuvu	117	714	6	837	629
Vitigo	530	863	0	1393	932
Lovu	310	1636	7	1953	1251
Tavakubu	460	1203	22	1865	953
Yasawa- i-rara	107	-	-	1-7	69
Vukama	203	-	-	2-3	124
Nabukeru	158	-	-	158	85
Nacula	405	-	-	405	159
Vuaki	206	-	26	232	108
Yaqeta	204	-	-	204	121
Kese	828	1	9	838	508
Naibalbale	145	-	-	145	80
Yalobi	452	-	-	452	260
Namara	112	-	-	112	48
TOTAL	9,386	21,371	292	31,049	20,709

These figures were provided by the Elections Office.

Thus the Alliance Party won the North Central Indian National Seat by 241 votes (259 votes if the informal votes are taken into account).^{*9}

The FLP made a considerable impact in the North Central Indian National Constituency by-election having displaced the NFP as the leading opponent of the Alliance Party. Its advent meant that the NFP lost a secure seat to the Alliance Party and suffered a repeat of the second 1977 General Election.

Uday Singh's victory was due to three factors; first, the Alliance party machinery at the polling stations worked well following intense local level campaigning to retain Alliance party supporters; second, Uday Singh being a local person of prominence who had been a candidate in two elections previously, was known to the voters. This was coupled with the appeal of the Alliance Party to specific groups, for instance, Gujeratis and Muslims. Third, though the FLP had made in-roads into the Alliance's Indo- and Ethnic Fijian supporters, Indo-Fijian Alliance people were strengthened by dissatisfied elements from the NFP, including businessmen and Muslims. Not less than 60% of the Ethnic Fijians who turned out to vote, voted Alliance.

It is also important to note that the open identification of Ethnic Fijians with the Alliance Party acted as a brake on any large scale overt Ethnic Fijian support for the FLP in many rural areas. Moreover, in Nukuloa Indo-Fijians went through the Alliance shed in large numbers and most probably voted Alliance. The post-1982 General Elections threat by land owners of Toge village in Naloto, led by Navitlai Ragona, to evict "Indians" for not voting for Uday Singh and Maliji Raibe, seemed to have worked.

The FLP did extremely well, a fact that FLP candidate Mahendra Chaudhry and other FLP executives have emphasised. Its narrow defeat could have easily

* On the same night, 14 December, counting proceeded for the Town Council Elections in Labasa and Nadi. The Alliance party won the Labasa elections with seven seats as against Labour's five. In the Qawa ward the FLP won four seats previously held by the Alliance Party. Alliance won the Nadi Town Council Election for the first time in nine years, gaining eight seats, with the Ratepayers and Citizens' Association taking four, and the FLP only one. In both town councils the ruling NFP was 'wiped out' (Sunday Times, 15 December 1985, p.1).

been rectified by more a systematic organisation for transportation for potential FLP voters in areas such as Tavakubu, Rarawai and Nukuloa. The latter station, an Alliance party stronghold, covered an area that was much too large for FLP voters in marginal areas to get in to vote. The FLP's transport arrangements in this locality was inadequate compared with that for other polling-station areas.

Despite its lack of systematic organisation of the local level in the North Central Indian National constituency, the FLP did well. But did FLP votes really mean a movement towards class-based politics?

Race vs. Class

At the wider level, the claim by the FLP's Treasurer and Lord Mayor of Suva, Bob Kumar at the FLP election rally of 7 December 1985 that 'race was out' from Fiji politics is obviously not valid. Fiji's working class and peasantry have been divided and managed by race and religion for too long for these factors to disappear. Parochialism based on ethnicity was clearly reflected by the show of solidarity by Ethnic Fijians for the Alliance - even in localities such as Rarawai where a majority of people gain their livelihood by working at the FSC sugar mill. Indo-Fijians, though dissatisfied and frustrated with NFP leadership did not come en masse to vote for FLP. A hard core of at least 4,000 voted along racial lines. Many Muslims and Gujeratis apparently shifted their allegiance from the NFP to the Alliance for business and communal reasons.

The FLP's Indo-Fijian support came largely from the 'Flower Faction' of the NFP, although it also pulled support from Koya's Faction as well as from the Alliance Party. The FLP will have to fight very hard to remove the Alliance label that it is just a manifestation of the Flower Faction, particularly given that a number of its most active adherents during the election were formerly supporters of this faction.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that the use of local men of prominence, such as sardars and pundits did not help to give the FLP a non-racial and non-religious image. A number of these local activists gave speeches that were religiously biased using analogies from Hindu mythology. It is doubtful if any self-respecting Muslim would vote for the FLP having listened to such speakers. Their involvement as leaders of local factions also helped to alienate members of other factions.

It is likely that the FLP picked up more than 20% of Ethnic Fijian votes in a number of polling stations but this was not exhibited in terms of presence at most polling stations.¹⁶ In Drasa, Vitogo and Tavakubu, Ethnic Fijian votes went openly to the FLP. Reports which included Alliance sources indicated (Sunday Sun, Dec. 15 1985, p.1), that in parts of Magadro (inland Viti Levu) and the Yasawas, there was a split in Ethnic Fijian votes in favour of the FLP. Assuming that in these areas the FLP gained between 40 and 50 per cent of the votes cast, it is still not likely that the FLP got more than a third of the Ethnic Fijian votes overall. As in the first general election of 1977, it is apparent that large numbers of Ethnic Fijians chose to show their ambivalence by not turning up to vote.

Mr James Shankar Singh, in an interview after the elections, argued that he knew that he would lose because the NFP's morale was at a low ebb. But, he maintained the "The National Federation Party will not die overnight" (Fiji Sun, 16 Dec. 1985, p.3). Undoubtedly the proposed upgrading of the NFP's organisation will have implications for the FLP and the nation.

From this description of the by-election it is apparent that ethnicity and parochial issues still loom large in voters' minds. The discussion of issues as promoted by the FLP is a step forward in the political education of the people of Fiji but it will take time before such lessons will be translated into votes for the FLP. The tactics of the Alliance and the NFP are based on ethnicity; their racial and religious appeals, the fear of upsetting established conventions upheld and enforced by local hierarchies, all contributed to the continued significance of race over class.

It is noteworthy, however, that significant numbers of Ethnic Fijians in the Ba area identified openly with NFP. This fact (which was also apparent in the first General Election of 1977) seems to have been overlooked by party leader Siddiq Koya.¹⁷ Of importance, too, is that segment of the voters who emphasised inequality, poverty and the hardships faced by workers and peasants as reasons for voting FLP. Political education by the FLP should increase the number of people who think along these lines. Indeed, it could be argued that many former supporters of the NFP voted for Labour because it had appeared to oppose injustice and sought a egalitarian society. Dissatisfaction with the NFP's failure to achieve this goal prodded them into supporting the FLP. The fact that large numbers of Indo-Fijian peasants and workers voted for the FLP augurs well for the Party as the

drawers of votes from low-income earners in the country. It is also apparent that most established businessmen, rich farmers, landlords and professions have identified themselves with the Alliance Party.

Implications of the By-election Result and the Fiji Labour Party

Perhaps the single most important consequence of the formation of the FLP has been its impact on the NFP. The viability of the NFP as the dominant Opposition Party is now in serious jeopardy. This state of affairs is due to the personality conflicts, the absence of an ideology (except racial appeal) in the NFP, and the advent of an alternative in the FLP. Dissatisfied elements of the NFP have switched support to the FLP. As a result the NFP's future as a viable party is in doubt.

This situation is clearly manifested in the present period not only by the by-election result but also by the results of the Suva City Council Election. In the capital city as mentioned earlier, the NFP failed to gain any seats - a drastic outcome given its previously dominant position. In Nadi there was a deliberate decision not to contest the election with the NFP name or symbols. In Labasa also the NFP did not win any seats. Thus the NFP was 'wiped out' (Fiji Times, Dec. 15 1985) from the councils during the elections.

However, in the immediate future, especially that leading to the next general election in 1987, the NFP's movement towards 'self-destruction' might not be at a sufficiently rapid pace to assure the FLP a clearer field to challenge Alliance hegemony. As argued earlier, support from the former Flower Faction of the NFP is there for the taking. To this may be added working class elements who formerly supported the NFP's Dove faction as well as some former working class General Elector and Ethnic Fijian supporters of the Alliance Party, both largely derived from urban and peri-urban areas where there is more latitude for dissent.

Meanwhile the NFP's hard core supporters from the cane-farming communities as well as those Indo-Fijians concerned to retain an 'Indian' party to safeguard their 'racial' interests will undoubtedly continue to support the NFP. Some NFP elements are already emphasising this role and have even suggested a new name for the Party (Fiji Times, Jan. 24 1986). Similarly, the small number of Ethnic Fijians who have publicly aligned themselves to NFP will continue to do so. It is not clear whether WUF,

In the aftermath of the "mudslinging" 1982 General Election, a Fiji Times editorial stated that "The election result has sadly demonstrated a yawning gap between the two major races. Voting has been largely on racial lines..." Pointing out that the Alliance received more Indo-Fijian votes than the number of Ethnic Fijians voting NFP, it asserted, "But neither the Alliance nor the Opposition can really claim to be truly multiracial judging from the voting figures".¹⁸ At this juncture it is unlikely that the FLP will be able to make such significant inroads into indigenous Fijian votes in order to make itself the multiracial party in Fiji.

However, what is likely to happen is that the Alliance will successfully label the FLP as another NFP or 'Indian Party' particularly given the traditional support (some would say gullibility) of Ethnic Fijian voters for this kind of political fare. On the other hand, the NFP will claim that the FLP is not an 'Indian' party, thereby taking away a significant minority of Indo-Fijian voters. In terms of votes cast, the FLP will do well but it is not likely to become the majority party in 1987. That distinction will again go to the Alliance party.

The scenario for 1987 is likely to be a repeat of the second General Election of September 1977 when the Alliance won 36 of the 52 seats (2 more than ever before) and 12 more than the 24 it had won in the April election of that year. This overwhelming Alliance Party victory was due to the emergence of two competing NFP factions. This self-inflicted injury led to NFP seats being reduced from 26 to 15 (12 Flower MPs and 3 Dove MPs). In April a united NFP had won the North-Eastern National, North Western National, North Central National, Vanua Levu North Western National, South Western National, South Eastern National, General Western National, and General North National seats. In the subsequent September elections, however, 13 of these 16 seats were lost to the Alliance Party.

Again in July 1982 a united NFP/WUF coalition regained all the national seats (12) where Indo-Fijians are numerically superior. But in a three-way electoral contest it is likely that the FLP would make significant inroads into NFP areas. It might even win between 6 and 10 'Indian' communal seats, but it is unlikely that the FLP could pick up more than five national seats. In the national cross-voting seats, the Alliance is likely to have a landslide, retaining its Ethnic Fijian and General Elector voters and receiving between 16 and 25 per cent of Indo-Fijian votes it would romp home with a large majority.

This majority might be the largest ever in Fiji because in certain Indian communal seats such as Ba, Tavua/Vaitoka and Sigatoka, the Alliance received between 23-27 per cent of the votes compared with 14 per cent overall (Fiji Times, Sept. 26 1977). The Alliance assertion that it can now look to winning some 'Indian' communal seats is not just wishful thinking. On the basis of past indications and its current position, the Alliance is likely to win at least 36 seats including all 'Fijian' communal, all 'General Elector' communal, all 'General National and at least 16 of the remaining 'Fijian' and 'Indian' national seats.

FLP Response

The above scenario is based on the FLP's performance to date and the weakening of the NFP. The FLP has a number of options to prevent an Alliance tidal wave. The first and most obvious is to do a deal with NFP so that the energies of the two parties are not wasted. Instead of fighting each other, they might work out a division of seats or form a coalition. This option smacks of opportunism and is not ideologically sound. It would compromise many parts of the Labour platform.

A second option is for the FLP to work extremely hard to discredit the NFP. The present crisis in the cane industry and the inability of NFP leaders to cope with it provides obvious advantages. Indeed the latter's co-option into the Growers' Council ties their hands and discredits them simultaneously. The FLP current strategy of increasing the National Farmers' Union and FLP membership among farmers is therefore useful. To completely destroy the NFP might be difficult, but if the NFP had already been wiped out in most of the urban areas, a concerted drive in the rural areas might just help to tip the balance in the FLP's favour.

Third, the FLP must seriously challenge the Fijian Association's (Alliance Party) hegemony over Ethnic Fijians. In the short term recruitment of local Ethnic Fijian dignitaries is vital. But the FLP must go out into the villages and make its presence felt. It must take up local level specific concerns in order to do this. The FLP must also emphasise the secrecy of ballots, that people have a right to vote for which ever party they choose. That there will be an Alliance shed where all the establishment figures are gathered should not deter people from voting for another party. The fear of ostracism and victimisation might compel people to enter the Alliance shed, perhaps to drink the yagona and smoke the

cigarettes offered. But voters must be told that their vote is by secret ballot and that such expressions of self-interest by a political party does not compel them to vote for it.

As a working class party the FLP must make its position clear in relation to workers' conditions and capitalist exploitation. In this way not only might workers (including landless cane cutters) of all ethnic categories support the FLP but also and perhaps most crucially the working and unemployed elements among the General Electors may become aware of their being used hitherto and join the FLP in large numbers. Its non-racial position obviously already appeals to many of them. Finally, the FLP must seek out suitable candidates, taking account of their contribution to the working people's movements, their ideology and their ethnic background. Such early initiatives will help facilitate a good start in the long hard road to success.

NFP's future

To survive the NFP will have to resolve its leadership problems and make a concerted attempt to woo back those elements that have left the party in dismay. This is particularly important in relation to sitting Parliamentarians who have a long history of representing particular constituencies.

Our study has indicated that there is a solid bedrock of support for the NFP, even at a time when it is at its lowest ebb. A show of solidarity among NFP leaders will no doubt reinforce this group and bring back many formerly frustrated supporters.

The ideological factors which contributed to the formation of the NFP remain unresolved in the NFP. Its now more affluent leadership has tended not to dwell on these factors. Back in the 1960s the party was the champion of equality and justice for all Fiji people irrespective of their 'race'. Its demand for 'common roll' - one man, one vote was a manifestation of its search for parity between the ethnic categories. It was a populist party (Norton, 1979). Today this major foundation stone of the NFP has been compromised and jettisoned.

Other factors such as the fight against racism, insecurity of land tenure, cane contracts, cane payments, loan-terms, employment, educational opportunities and income disparities continue to cause concern in the lives

of most Indo-Fijians. The NFP can take up these issues and retain legitimacy in the eyes of its supporters. But without that earlier ideology, the Party is likely to become more of an exclusively 'racial' party than it currently is.

With regards to the 1987 General Elections, a modified NFP (Dove Faction?) is likely to contest all the 'Indian' communal seats and all the national seats where Indo-Fijian voters predominate. If there has been no reconciliation, it is likely that some former NFP MPs may stand as 'independents'. If this occurs then the anti-Alliance votes will be further split, enabling the ruling party even bigger majorities in the national seats and the possibility of capturing some 'Indian' communal seats also.

Conclusion

The North Central Indian National by-election result indicates that the FLP is an emergent force to reckon with in Fiji politics. It successfully displaced the NFP as the long-standing opponent of the Alliance Party in this constituency as well as in the three urban local council elections. But class was not the major variable in this shift. The NFP is down but not out and this means that the splitting of anti-Alliance votes will strengthen the Alliance Party's position. In the North Central Indian National Constituency, the Alliance recaptured the seat it lost in 1982.

This result is likely to be repeated in the forthcoming 1987 General Election. It is unlikely that the Alliance will call a snap election. It is a secure party. By playing a wait and see game, its position may even be further strengthened if the NFP resolves some of its difficulties. A halt to the disintegration of the NFP can only be to the Alliance's advantage.

In such circumstances the FLP has a difficult struggle ahead. Only a radical ideology, class awareness, strong leadership and organisational participation on factory floors and farm sites can propel the party forward.

REFERENCES

1. The Flour Mills of Fiji scandal involved this company's attempt to defraud the Fijian state by making false statements about transportation costs and the amount of wheat and flour it had in stock thereby falsifying its profitability (see Fiji Sun and Fiji Times, September 1978 to August 1979).
2. In the 52 member House of Representatives, each 'racial category' identified by the state is given a certain number of seats. Thus the Indo-Fijians are given 22 "Indian" seats of which 12 are 'communal' seats for which only "Indians" can vote. Ethnic Fijians are similarly allocated 22 "Fijian Seats". Of the Sino-Fijian, Euro-Fijian and mixed race people of European parentage, "Part-Europeans" receive 8 seats, 3 of which are communal while the remainder are based on cross-voting. Cross voting seats, numbering 25, have candidates of specified "races" but all voters can vote for them.
3. The term 'class' denotes (a) the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production, (b) location in the production process, (c) income and status.
4. Unfortunately because of the researchers' other commitments, the small pocket meetings and major political rallies on 7 December in Ba could not be covered. Newspaper and radio reports were examined in lieu of direct observation.
5. Perhaps this incident underlines the fact that the selective and racist application of the father's name to people of Indo-Fijian ancestry for administrative purposes (because their names are the same) needs to be changed. A perusal of the final voter-polls of the North Central Indian National seat is revealing in this context. Many indigenous Fijians have the same name and consequently have to be given a number after their names! According to Malakai Tawake, Mocevakaca is from Maruku rather than Vanuabalavu.
6. This is a remarkable situation where a candidate from a constituency does not need to be a long-standing resident of the country or indeed a registered voter but those who nominate him/her must be registered voters of the constituency in which the election is being held. Another aspect of this case that needs scrutiny and perhaps legal action is the claim by Mr Luke Mocevakaca that he had voted in the 1982 General Elections, although it was discovered subsequently that he was not registered as a voter.
7. The term 'capitalist' denotes in this context those owners of property who engage wage labour on a

- regular basis for the purposes of production, transportation and marketing of commodities.
8. Much earlier, on 24 June the Fiji Times reported that the NFP Youth Wing MP, Singh had succeeded in moving a motion to ask Koya to resign from the Parliament at a Lautoka branch meeting of the NFP.
 9. Gujaratis are a distinct ethnic community within the broad Indo-Fijian category. This community owns some 80 per cent of all retail outlets in Fiji's urban centres, and some members of the community are very large owners of capital (Ali, 1978, 16, 58). Until recently Gujarati professionals, especially lawyers, also provided political leadership for the rest of the Indo-Fijians in Fiji.
 10. Marela House, owned by the Prime Minister's family was rented out to the Ministry of Education at a relatively high rental and there were a number of unanswered questions about the deal (see Fiji Sun and Fiji Times of June, July and August).
 11. The exception to these establishment chiefs was the Tui Vitogo, Ratu Jovesa Sovasova, who said that he remained a member of the NFP-WUF coalition (Fiji Sun, Dec. 9 1985).
 12. In the second election of 1977 in September, the NFP split into two factions called the Flower and Dove factions so named because of the symbols assigned to them. Dissatisfaction with Siddiq Koya's leadership by other ambitious NFP MPs caused this division.
 13. The sample comprised 90% males as interviewing females was not at all easy. Most females were not accessible and requests to speak to females were not regarded with favour. Male respondents were seen as speaking for themselves as well as for their female kin. The women that we spoke to were mostly in the polling stations and identified themselves as supporters of particular parties.
 14. In Ba town on the last day of polling tensions surfaced between FLP and NFP activists when the latter alleged that the former were deliberately driving past their shed to cause dust to rise and create discomfort. The police stepped in and stopped all vehicles heading down the road to St Teresa's School where the actual polling was taking place. FLP supporters moved their table to the main road and some heated words were exchanged.
 15. Thus Mr L. Shiu Shankar who was campaigning for the FLP is a former Flower Faction person. He had appealed to Hindu chauvinism in the campaign for the September 1977 Election (Fiji Sun, September 23 1977, p. 29).

16. This assessment is based on Ethnic Fijian turn-out in the FLP election rallies but it is important to keep these questions in mind: (a) were those who attended registered voters? (b) were they attending to satisfy their curiosity about a new party? and (c) did they successfully resist the enormous pressure in their villages to vote for Alliance or did they not vote at all?
17. Mr Koya, unfortunately, dwelled on the "Indianness" of the NFP, no doubt alienating indigenous Fijian support in the process (Fiji Times, December 16, 1985, p.2).
18. In terms of racial block voting, the General Electors are the most consistent supporters of the Alliance Party - a fact that the Fiji Times conveniently overlooks.

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