

**The 2000 Speight coup in Fiji:
An analysis of the role of *The Fiji
Times* and the impact of partisan
media**

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Research abstract

The 2000 Speight coup in Fiji: An analysis of the role of *The Fiji Times* and the impact of partisan media.

In May 1999, Mahendra Pal Chaudhry was sworn in as the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister of Fiji. A year later, an unruly protest march opposing his leadership climaxed in a renegade soldier-led attempted coup. The rebel Counter-Revolutionary Warfare soldiers led by a failed businessman, George Speight, took the elected Fiji government hostage. As was the case with the original coup d'état in May 1987, the Labour-led Indo-Fijian dominated coalition government's term in office was cut short by Speight and his ethno-nationalist forces.

The May 2000 attempted coup, the dissolution of Chaudhry government and the lack of popular uprising to support democracy have been partially attributed to an alleged irresponsible journalism which put considerable pressure on the fledgling first Indo-Fijian-led government. Claims have been made that the media, particularly *The Fiji Times*, played a critical role in this event through the way it portrayed Chaudhry and his government. Such reporting has been challenged as having contributed to racial animosity, leading to political disorder.

This research, conducted through content analysis between May 1999 and May 2000 along with an examination of documents and the coup literature, seeks to explore any role *The Fiji Times* may have played leading to political instability, culminating in the putsch, seizure of the Parliament and eventual imprisonment of George Speight after his death sentence for treason was commuted to life in jail. The thesis discusses the performance of *The Fiji Times* in the context of a range of media theories and models in a developing nation and examines possible contributory factors in the fall of democracy and the one-year rule of the Chaudhry government.

The author of this thesis also draws on his own personal experience in the Fiji news media as the publisher of one of Fiji's three daily newspapers, *Fiji's Daily Post*; as a columnist; as a political commentator and as an independent Hindi programme presenter for the public broadcaster, Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, during this turbulent period.

Statement of Source

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. It contains no material either in whole or part, submitted for a degree at this or any other University.

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Ranjit Singh

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25 January 2011

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Terminologies, acronyms and abbreviations

Terminologies

Fijians refer to i-Taukei or the indigenous people of Fiji

Indo-Fijians or *Indians* refer to people of Indian origin who are Fiji citizens and are the descendents of indentured labourers.

Gujarati are descendents of the business class who came to Fiji as free settlers from Gujarat or Maharashtra (Mumbai) provinces of India; they also generally fall in the category of Indo-Fijians collectively.

Chinese are referred to as descendents of Chinese and Asians from the Chinese sub-continent who are Fiji citizens.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFP	Agence France-Presse
ALTA	Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
CCF	Citizen's Constitutional Forum
CDA	Christian Democratic Alliance
CDC	Commonwealth Development Corporation.
CDF	Commodity Development Fund
CRW	Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit
DJ	Development Journalism
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
FAP	Fijian Association Party
FDB	Fiji Development Bank
FHC	Fiji Hardwoods Corporation
FLP	Fiji Labour Party
FT	<i>The Fiji Times</i> [Note it is inclusive of "The"]
GCC	Great Council of Chiefs
LTE	Letters to Editor
MLP	Mooloolaba Paper. This refers to Dr. David Robie's presentation in Mooloolaba, QLD.

MPC	Mahendra Pal Chaudhry
NBL	No Byline
NFP	National Federation Party
NLTB	Native Land Trust Board
PANU	Party of National Unity
PM	Propaganda Model
PSC	Public Service Commission
SDL	Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua
SVT	Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei
TRM	Timber Resources Management
USP	The University of the South Pacific

Map of Fiji



Chronology

1874

Oct 10 Fiji ceded to Britain, and Deed of Cession signed

1915

May 10 Banshi, author's grandfather arrives in Fiji on the ship *Ganges II* from Karauli, Rajasthan, India to serve his five year indenture (Girmit) after which he decided to stay back in Fiji

1970

Oct 10 Fiji gains independence, Ratu Mara is the first Prime Minister

1985

Jul 1 Founding of Fiji Labour Party, which later impacts on Fiji's history

1987

Apr 12 Dr Timoci Bavadra's Fiji Labour Party wins general elections and subsequently takes the charge of Fiji government from Ratu Mara's Alliance Party.

May 14 Sitiveni Rabuka's first coup

Sep 26 Rabuka executes second coup

Oct 7 Fiji declared a Republic

1988

Dec 5 Death of Dr Timoci Bavadra

1990

July 25 New 1990 Constitution promulgated, considered racist

1992

June 28 The chief-sponsored party, SVT wins elections and Rabuka becomes prime minister

1994

Ratu Mara succeeds the late Ratu Penaia Ganilau as President

1997

July 25 New 1997 constitution promulgated, considered multiracial

1999

May 19 Mahendra Chaudhry becomes Fiji's first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister

2000

April 21 Apisai Tora-led Taukei Movement march in Lautoka with some 500 people, marching against the Chaudhry government

April 28 Second Taukei march in Suva with some 4000 people.

May 19 Third Taukei march in Suva with some 10,000 people.

The putsch of George Speight, who takes over Fiji's Parliament, and takes the government members as hostages.

May 27 Chaudhry sacked as PM by the President, Ratu Mara

May 29 The Military Commander Frank Bainimarama declares martial law and Ratu Mara is removed as the President

Jul 3 Laisenia Qarase named as interim prime minister by the military

Jul 9 Muanikau Accord signed

Jul 27 Speight and group arrested

Nov 2 Mutiny at Army Headquarters, attempt on life of Bainimarama, and eight people killed.

2001

Sep 12 Qarase's new SDL government won the elections and sworn in as the government

2002

Feb 18 Speight convicted of treason, sentenced to death, but commuted to life imprisonment

2004

Apr 19 Death of Ratu Mara

2006

April Qarase wins a controversial election to form government

Dec 5 Frank Bainimarama takes over Qarase's government to "clean-up" the government apparatus after allegations of corruption.

2009

April 10 1997 Constitution abrogated, Judiciary suspended and Bainimarama appointed as Prime Minister by the president, Iloilo.

July 31 Ailing President Iloilo retired and Ratu Epeli Nailatikau appointed as new President

2010

June 28 Media Industry Development Decree 2010 gazetted on 25 June and came into effect from 28 June, 2010, requiring 90% local ownership with other controls.

PART I: A THEORETICAL BASE

Chapter 1: Introduction

Fiji has had its political problems since independence in 1970, but these were muted with the influential chiefly rule of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who was the first Prime Minister. The problems were somewhat due to State weaknesses; however, the major issue was the ethnic divisions that were a legacy from Fiji's colonial past. While it is not of the State's making, it nevertheless is its responsibility. Importation of indentured labourers from India saw the newly settled migrants exceeding the indigenous population after World War II and Fiji has since been toying with the claims of domination of one race over the other; this has been the cause of tensions. Successive governments have to be held responsible for failing to deal decisively with Fiji's problems through electoral reforms, civic education and school curriculum revision, among others. State policies had entrenched racism, and its inaction and weaknesses have combined to deliver Fiji its problems. The growth of the military and its intervention made it into "the final arbiter of Fiji's politics since it staged the first coup in 1987" (Fraenkel & Firth, 2009, p. 4). Fiji's notoriety for political instability, with its "regular overthrow of government has earned the country the journalistic epithet "coup coup land" (Ibid). As Fraenkel and Firth (2009) observed, any electoral victory in post-independent Fiji by parties with predominantly Indo-Fijians either culminated in constitutional crisis (1977) or coups (1987, 2000).

As has been echoed elsewhere by those conducting research on the media and Fiji's democracy, including Devi (1992) and Kiran (2005), democracy was only acceptable in Fiji as long as Fijians were in control of government. In 1977, the National Federation Party (NFP) had a two-seat majority over Ratu Mara's Alliance party. Due to reported internal bickering, the NFP was supposedly unable to form a government and the then Governor General, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, declared Ratu Mara the minority Prime Minister. Claims of bias against Ratu Sir George are still common today. In the subsequent election, Ratu Mara came back with a sizeable majority. However, 1987 and 2000 saw more violent actions where power was construed as gone to the "Indian" dominated government. It appeared that whenever the paramountcy of indigenous Fijians was breached (1977, 1987 and 1999), they tended to react violently to take control (Fraenkel & Firth, 2009, p. 4).

The architect of the 1997 Constitution, Dr Brij Lal (2000a) summed up the events of the 2000 Speight putsch, which also applied to the crisis in 1977 and Rabuka's coup in 1987:

Fiji has failed the ultimate test of democracy: To survive a change of government...The fabric of multiracialism and harmonious race relations has been seriously strained. The philosophy of multiethnic cooperation on the basis of equal citizenship has been discarded. (p. 7)

While varying reasons have been given for the past coups in general and Speight's 2000 putsch in particular, the prime victim of Speight's invasion, Mahendra Pal Chaudhry (MPC) blamed the media, in particular, *The Fiji Times* for the overthrow of his government.

When Chaudhry was released from captivity on July 14, he partly blamed the media for the overthrow of his government. Some sectors of the media are alleged to have waged a bitter campaign against the Coalition Government and its roll-back of privatisation in the year after the Fiji Labour Party-led coalition had been elected in a landslide victory in May, 1999. In the early weeks of the insurrection, the media enjoyed an unusually close relationship with Speight and the hostage-takers, raising ethical questions.(Robie, 2002a, (p. 12)

1.1 The Mooloolaba Paper (MLP) - the genesis of allegations on *The Fiji Times*

Presenting an analysis paper at the Journalism Education Association (JEA) conference at Mooloolaba, Queensland in 2000, Dr Robie triggered a controversy with his revelations and exposure of the media's alleged role in the unsettling of Chaudhry's People's Coalition government. What is significant is that the Mooloolaba conference was the first occasion when such a revelation had been publicly made (this is referred to as the Mooloolaba Paper with the acronym of MLP). After this genesis, other academics and reporters picked up the pieces and started their probe on the media's alleged role in Fiji's political instability.

With reference in particular to *The Fiji Times*, Robie (2000a), (2000b), (2004) was forthright and perhaps the first commentator to censure The Fiji Times group, Fiji's largest news organisation owned by Rupert Murdoch (till October 2010), for its role in contributing to the instability:

Critics regard *The Fiji Times*, in particular, as having a hostile editorial stance towards the Chaudhry Government...While the news media was fairly diligent, and at times courageous when reporting hard news developments, and the views of prominent politicians and political parties during the conflict, it was not so effective at covering civil society's perspectives. Fiji lacks enough critically thinking journalists who can provide in-depth, perspectives and balanced articles and commentaries. Most serious commentaries and analysis during the crisis were provided by non-journalists. (p. 13)

His thoughts and allegations have prompted academic research linking the role of the media with political instability or otherwise. Among others, this body of analysis and research includes Duncan (2002), [Padmini] Gaunder (2006), [Christine] Gounder (2006), Kiran (2005) and Obini (2000) .

1.2 Why this research and thesis?

Robie (2000c) had started the ball rolling at the Mooloolaba conference about the role of the media in unsettling a democratic government, and this had prompted some research in and around this area. However, no in-depth study through a systematic content analysis had been done to substantiate the allegations that have been made by Chaudhry and his supporters and repeated by various academics and politicians since initially postulated through MLP by Robie (2000c).

As somebody who was directly involved during the MPC rule and also during the Speight putsch, this was an opportunity to explore deeply the role of the media in a multiracial developing democracy. As author of this thesis, I was also a spectator who witnessed history unfolding on that fateful day of 19 May 2000 when a political march was hijacked by the ethno-nationalist elements to invade Fiji's Parliament. The unruly crowd provided a human shield for the renegade soldiers led by a failed and bankrupt part-Fijian businessman, George Speight who had held the members of the People's Coalition government as hostages. Speight was later imprisoned for treason after his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment on 18 February, 2002.

At the time I was the publisher of *Fiji's Daily Post* and was an eyewitness to looting and burning of Suva City from my Toorak Office of the newspaper. The added advantage in this research is that it is undertaken and interpreted by a former media management practitioner who was politically removed from his media positions by two polarised prime ministers - Mahendra Chaudhry and Laisenia Qarase respectively. The

episode about my removal from Radio Fiji as a political commentator by Chaudhry and Vayeshnoi is covered in Chapter 21 of the content analysis.

I also was removed and made “redundant” by the Interim Qarase regime from *Fiji’s Daily Post* when I as the publisher, refused to apologise to Qarase’s fellow Lauan, Chief Justice Timoci Tuivaga, who felt maligned by the column *Liu Muri* written under the nom-de-plume of *Aage Picche* (Liu Muri, 2001). Both these satirical names, in Fijian and Hindi languages respectively mean a slippery, dicey, sneaky and unpredictable individual. This column proved to live up to its name as it delved deeper into the methods of racist and underhand dealings of the Qarase regime from the days of its inception. In this instance, the failed Commissioner of Police during the coup, Isikia Savua, was cleared by an enquiry held under camera, presided and adjudged by the Chief Justice. It was common knowledge that Savua was missing when Suva was being looted and despite previous warnings on the march, no Police Operation Order was prepared for the event. The article referred to Tuivaga’s verdict on Savua as a “fraud on the nation” (Liu Muri, 2001). That report absolving Savua’s dereliction of police duties of any wrongdoing still remains a secret.

This research looks at other underlying issues that contributed to the fall of the democratically-elected government of Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, despite its overwhelming mandate. The other important objective of this research analysis has been to study various media theories and relate the relevance and applicability of those theories with the content analysis. In order to undertake this task, this thesis is divided into three Parts.

Part I is the theoretical base of this thesis. It has Chapters 1 to 6 inclusive. While Chapter 1 is the introductory piece, Chapter 2 looks at various media theories to relate them later with the content analysis. Chapter 3 looks at various literature on the subject of role of the media and especially its relations and responsibilities in supporting democracy. Chapter 4 reviews previous research in and around this subject area of the effects of media on governments. Chapter 5 and 6 respectively explore the literature on the methodology and looks at the research questions.

Part II comprises Chapters 7 to 26 inclusive and this is the actual data analysis and interpretation section. Part III is the discussion section and comprises Chapters 27 to 29 inclusive. In Chapter 27, comparison is made with similar news situations during

Qarase's government to place the reporting in better perspectives on how FT reported similar incidents during the reign of a different indigenous Fijian government. Chapter 28 looks at the relevance of the research data with its fit with the media theories discussed in Chapter 2 earlier. Chapter 29 is the final chapter which rounds up the thesis with conclusions which attempt to answer the research questions raised in the methodology section in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Media Theories

2.1 Siebert et al.'s Four Theories of the Press

One cannot imagine modern society without the presence of mass media which comprises newspapers, television, magazines radio and films. To different people, mass media means different things and serves different purposes. This is dependent on the stage of development of the society and the type of political and economic systems in which the media functions. Severin and Tankard Jr (2001) postulate that:

Some understanding of the role of mass communication in society is necessary for a complete theory of mass communication. One of the goals of communication theory is to make possible accurate predictions of the effects of the mass media. Political, social, and economic forces directly affect media content. Media ownership and control affect media content, which in turn determines media effects. (p. 309)

While embarking on research into the media and its effects on the community, it is essential to have a good grounding on the theories that have explained the development, transition and growth of media. McQuail (2000) regards the publication of a small textbook by three authors as “a significant moment in the development of theorising about the media” (p.153). He regards the work of Siebert, Petersen and Schramm (1963), published originally in 1956, to be the genesis of theories which have set out to describe the early hypothesis of the press in relation to politics and society.

The questions that Siebert et al. (1963), raise are: why is the press as it is, why it serves different purpose, why it is shaped differently in different countries and why the one in (the former) Soviet Union was different from the one in the United States of America, Argentina or other countries. They answer their question by arguing that the type of press is dependent on what people do in respective countries and what their experience wishes them to read. However, citing a more basic and important reason for the differences, the authors say that:

The press always takes on the form and colorisation of the social and political structures within which it operates. Especially, it reflects the system of social control whereby the individuals and institutions are adjusted. (p. 1)

They proceed to explain about the philosophical principles and political rationales which have become the basis for explaining different kinds of press prevalent in the

modern world. They laid the assumptions and beliefs of the society in order to understand the relationship of the press with the social system. Among others, it hinged on “the nature of man, the nature of society and the state, the relation of man to the state, and the nature of knowledge and the truth” (Ibid, p. 2). Initially they offered only two theories: *Authoritarian* and *Libertarian*. The *Soviet Communist* theory developed out of the *Authoritarian* while the *Social Responsibility* theory came out of the latter. Because the Russians developed a media system that was so different from the *Authoritarian* and the fact that the social responsibility theory was the launching pad for one direction of media in the United States of America in the 1950s, Siebert and others decided to classify these into four theories, which will be examined in greater detail below.

2.1.1 Authoritarian Theory

According to McQuail (1987), this name which was given by Siebert remains an appropriate one. This is because, when the press first began, this was in practice and during the sixteenth and seventeenth century European monarchies, the press was seen as a subordinate of state power, serving the interests of the ruling class (p.111). Severin and Tankard Jr. (2001) agree with this and add that during authoritarian rule, the printer was required to get permission and approval from the monarch or the government in order to print. Hence those in power used tools of licensing, patenting and even direct censorship to filter out criticisms against authority. Under such a regime, the press could either be publicly or privately owned but the bottom-line was that it was still regarded as an instrument that promoted and supported government policies (pp. 310-311).

The original authors provide a rationale of this theory:

The oldest of these theories is the Authoritarian. It came into being in the authoritarian climate of the late Renaissance, soon after the invention of printing. In that society, truth was conceived to be, not the product of the great mass of people, but a few wise men who were in a position to guide and direct their fellows. ...Publishing was thus a sort of agreement between the power source and publisher, in which the former granted a monopoly right and the latter gave support. (Siebert et al., 1963, pp. 2 - 3)

Summarised, the main principles of this theory are:

- Media should ensure it does nothing that undermines established authority or disturb order.
- Media is deemed to be the subordinate of the state authority.
- Media should do nothing to offend the dominant political and moral values.
- Censorship is deemed justified to enforce the above.
- Violations of the above should be an offence.
- Independence of journalists or other media professionals within their organisations is non-existent (McQuail, 1987, p. 112).

2.1.2 The Libertarian or Free Press theory

This theory symbolises the classic struggle for freedom and democracy against various forms of suppression. It is also important in terms of the constitutional base and functions of the American media system (McQuail, 2000, p. 154). It is stated to have evolved to counter the authoritarian view and emerged from the writings of Milton, Locke, and Mill for the purpose of helping to discover the truth and being a check on the government (Severin & Tankard Jr, 2001, p. 311).

In fact, the argument that it came to counter the authoritarian theory is true, as Siebert et al. (1963), confirm this:

The Libertarian theory reverses the relative position of man and society as we saw in the Authoritarian theory. Man is no longer conceived of as a dependent being to be led and directed, but rather as a rational being able to discern between truth and falsehood, between a better and worse alternative, when faced with conflicting evidence and alternative choices. Truth is no longer conceived as the property of power. Rather, the right to search the truth is one of the inalienable natural rights of man. And where does the press fit into the scheme? The press is conceived as a partner in the search for truth. (p. 3)

What the authors effectively state is that unlike in the authoritarian system, under this system the press has transformed into a tool of check and balance on government activity - it no longer worked as power's instrument. While Milton and Locke are attributed to have developed and laid the foundation of the libertarian press system in

the seventeenth century, further refinement and development took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth century

...when practically all democratic countries in the world adopted the libertarian theories and embodied them in their constitutions or fundamental laws. (Ibid, p.51)

The functions of mass media under this system were to inform and to entertain. However, in order for the press to have an economic base and financial independence, a third function of sales and advertising was inevitable. The press then became the medium to help discover truth and provide analytical rationale for solving political and social problems. With financial and economic support which was self-generated, it rendered the press free from government control and domination. As government and its officials were frequently the interested party in a resolution of disputes, an independent press removed their monopoly of control on access to people and control on information. This saw the refinement in function of the press where it transformed as a political institution whereby it was charged with keeping a check on government, ensuring it did not overstep its bounds. The Press then perhaps remained the only institution performing such a crucial task in its watchdog role (Ibid).

It was also the contention of libertarian theorists that with so many voices, there was a tendency for false information to filter through. Despite this, it was argued that this gave an opportunity to people to decide what was right or wrong. This is what McQuail (2000) calls a “self-righting” mechanism where, under a free market-place of ideas, “freely expressed truth will surely triumph over error when both are published free” (p.147).

This contention and other assumptions have had their share of critics. As Herman and Chomsky (2008) would later show, entry for new players were not that easy and as McQuail (2000) argues, it is not necessarily so that only private ownership leads to a freer press, nor does it necessarily lead to an improvement in quality. McQuail also criticises the ownership concept of the theory, saying it neglects barriers to entry and abuse of the system by the publishing power of the media monopolies (p.154). Despite its shortcomings, this theory still holds well in many countries and is still cherished. The following principles underlie the libertarian theory:

- No permit or licence should restrict publication and distribution.

- No third party should subject any publication to any form of censorship prior to publication.
- No punishment should be meted out for attacks by media on any government, official or political party. However exceptions are made for attacks on private individuals, for treason or for breach of national security.
- Nobody should compel any media to publish anything.
- Collection of information for publication by legal means should not be restricted.
- Sending or receiving of information and news across borders should remain unrestricted.
- Journalists and reporters should have freedom to exercise personal freedom and professionalism autonomy within their media organisations (McQuail, 1987, pp. 115- 116).

In summing up, the authors agree that this theory is synonymous with the development of democracy and a free economy with the themes of “self- righting process” and the “free market place of ideas.” It is perhaps appropriate to dub this theory as “the guiding principle of Western civilisation for more than two hundred years” (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 70).

2.1.3 Social Responsibility theory

McQuail (1987) attributes the origin of the Social Responsibility theory to the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press of 1947 (p. 116). Severin and Tankard Jr. (2001) concur with this, and add that the evolution of this theory was prompted by media practitioners and media codes in addition to the initiative of the Hutchins’ Commission (p. 314). The Commission identified five basic services that a socially responsible press should strive to do: accurate, comprehensive news coverage; a forum for exchange of comment; a means of projecting group opinions; a method of presenting and clarifying goals and values; and a way of reaching everyone (Schultz, 1998, p. 113).

The initiators of this theory agree that new concepts such as “the public’s right to know” and “the public responsibility of the press” were missing from the traditional libertarian

theory as that old theory overlooked to establish the public's right to information or called for the owners of the press to assume moral responsibility. They sketch out the general outline of the new theory as follows:

The theory has this major premise: Freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society. To the extent that the press recognise its responsibilities and makes them the basis of operational policies, the libertarian system will satisfy the needs of society. To the extent that the press does not assume its responsibilities, some other agency must see that the essential functions of mass communications are carried out. (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 74)

While the functions of the press under both the libertarian and social responsibility theories are the same, they nevertheless come with some added provisos. The Libertarian theory names some six functions of the press: to service the political system, to enlighten the public, to safeguard the freedom of the individual, to service economic functions, to provide entertainment and to maintain its financial viability in order to be freed from external pressures and obligations. However, Social Responsibility theory recognises that the press has not been performing those tasks satisfactorily. What it adds on is that while servicing the economic system, the press should not ignore its obligations to ensure that it also promotes democratic systems and enlightens the public with its analysis of stories being published (Ibid).

McQuail (1987) added that this theory has to work out a balance between differing principles of individual choice and freedom, freedom of media and media's obligation to society - there has to be a proper reconciliation between independence and obligation to society. The concept of freedom as clarified by Siebert et al., (1963), is that while the Libertarian theory propagated *negative* freedom, the Social Responsibility theory speaks of *positive* freedom. The former spoke about freedom from external control while the Social Responsibility theory calls for positive freedom where the necessary tools should be made available for this to happen. In other words, "Social Responsibility theory holds that the government must not merely allow freedom; it must also actively promote it" (p. 95). Elaborating on the concept of freedom, Siebert et al., (1963) give an analogy that the Libertarian theory provides negative liberty by telling a man that he is free to walk without first making sure that he is not crippled. On the other hand, the Social

Responsibility theory is not only confined to telling a man that he can walk, it provides positive freedom by providing him with appropriate tools to walk (Ibid, p. 94).

The main principles of social responsibility theory can be summed up as follows:

- Media owes a duty of care not only to its shareholders and the market, but to society as well.
- Such duty is fulfilled through setting up of high standards of truth, accuracy, objectivity, balance and informativeness.
- In observing the above, the media needs to be self-regulating within the confines of law and established institutions.
- Media needs to ensure that it avoids exposure to what may lead to crime, violence, civil disorder or give offence to minority groups.
- Media should reflect the diversity of its society and provide ample opportunity to rights of reply (McQuail, 1987, pp 117 - 118).

2.1.4 Soviet Media theory

For the sake of completeness we will briefly outline the Soviet Media Theory as it applied over more than eight decades; however there will be lesser emphasis on this because of its relative lack of contemporary relevance and comparison with the model of press that this thesis looks at. This theory has also been referred to as “Totalitarian” theory, and also interchangeably as Communist or Soviet Media theory.

McQuail (1987) says the complete reorganisation of the Russian press took place after the Revolution in 1917 and this theory derives its hypothesis from Marx, Engels and Lenin (p. 118). The priority of the Soviet press rested in contributing to the success and the continuity of the Soviet system. Because the media in the Soviet system were state-owned and state-controlled, such controls therefore were vested in the economic and political actions of the government. Effectively, the media under the Soviet system “exist solely as an arm of the state to further the state” (Severin & Tankard Jr, 2001, p. 315). Effectively, this applies equally to totalitarian systems of the right, hence the choice of this name by some.

Siebert et al., (1963) clarifies that because of the Marxist concept of unity and the sharp distinction between right and wrong positions, the chances of their media operating as a Fourth Estate, critical of the government or allowing free discussions would not be possible. Instead their press, as a tool of the working class or the military, was used as an instrument to interpret their doctrine or carry out their policies (p. 110). Soviet press is seen as “collective propagandist, agitator, organiser” with almost no advertising and not reporting on timely events but covering details on government policies and indoctrination of the socialist construction. Hence the Soviet press was timeless where unlike the Western media, up to 50 per cent of paper could be finalised weeks, if not months ahead. While events control Western media, it is the Soviet media which controlled the events. Hence the Soviet press decided things for people and convinced them without giving them an opportunity to choose otherwise (Ibid, p.135).

Because of the apparent similarity between the Authoritarian theory and the Soviet one, Siebert highlights some differences between them. The first is ownership where the Soviet press is state owned while those under the British authoritarian systems were privately owned. While the Authoritarian press was prevented from criticising government, it nevertheless had some leeway to be critical, but within limits. On the other hand the Soviet one not only does not criticise, in effect it is vested with increasing political awareness and project positively. While the Authoritarian system controlled the press with a view to maintaining the status quo, the Soviet one came out as a process of change and to help accomplish change. The authoritarian system was based on projecting a class system while the Soviet one worked towards creating a classless society (Ibid, p.141).

The assumptions of the Soviet theory can be summed up as follows:

- No private ownership, media should be state-owned and controlled, serving the interests of the working class.
- While providing positive functions in society, the media responds to the wishes of its audience.
- Media is the mouthpiece that should correctly project Marxist-Leninist principles.

- Journalists, as professionals should work for the best interests of society and can be subjected to censorship and even punishment for publishing things detrimental to society (McQuail, 1987, p.119).

2.1.5 A critique of the Four Theories of the Press

While it is now over half a century since the publishing of *Four Theories of the Press* (originally in 1956) by Siebert, Petersen and Schramm (1963), it was some four decades after its publication that some real critique of this work surfaced. Perhaps one may call it a very organised and systematic critique that was home-grown. Siebert with two others had launched their four theories at the University of Illinois. A group of eight scholars at the College of Communication at the same university, led by John C. Nerone (1995) produced this work. The authors came from a diverse set of disciplines such as law, history, journalism, ethics, advertising, political economics and communication theory (p. 181).

Nerone (1995) argues that the Four Theories was greatly influenced by the respective backgrounds of the three authors, between views that were influenced by the relationship between journalism education and press business, and between university research and the economic system. As their work was carried out during the Cold War period between USA and Russia, between Capitalism and Communism, these were reflected in their work (Ibid, p. 15). He adds that the theories are oversimplified and the book uses a four-part scheme for identifying the theories (Ibid, p. 20).

Another criticism is the narrow meaning of liberty, which means absence of any control from state, and fails to talk about other restraints of the media (Ibid, p. 23). A more serious concern is that Siebert et al., (1963) do not recognise any other forms of power other than the state. Nerone (1995) questions, how could the press claim to be free from control or domination when it is part of a business and the same economic concerns drive it? He argues that we are told that if a press is regulated by the state then it loses its ability to spot and expose the improper practices of the state. The corollary to that is:

...the press driven by capital cannot be expected to provide a thorough critique of the economic system or to offer alternatives because it is not “free from control or domination” by capital. Naturally, from its very beginning, the capital-driven press did not have as its aim to be a watchdog over the system of which it is a part. Watchdogs do not bite their owners (p. 26).

Lambeth (1995) joins the criticism declaring that the test of time has failed this approach, as it has failed to fully match reality. While the Soviet bloc has all but disappeared, libertarianism has been reduced to be more of an ideal and standard of freedom of speech and of the press and less of a description of any particular media theory exercised by any country. He however agrees that the gift of the Hutchins Commission, the social responsibility theory still remains influential even though it is still under revision (p. 5).

Despite their inadequacies, Lambeth (1995) attributes the historical sketching “of the evolution of social and political philosophies and of the ideological orientations of media systems that arose with them” to the concepts carved out by the *Four Theories* (p. 6). In addition, elements of the *Four Theories* are still used by the media systems of many nations, which prove their usefulness and applicability in modern times. Undoubtedly, these theories have been guiding principles and influential for aspiring journalists and academics.

2.2 The Propaganda Model

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in their book, originally published in 1988, *Manufacturing Consent: The political economy of mass media* (2008), have put forward a model as a framework for gauging, analysing and understanding the functioning of the US media. Their concept, called the “Propaganda Model”, hereafter referred to as PM, stipulates that media is not a free agent that the public have been made to believe. The media operates within restricted assumptions and while being dependent on the elite it also remains uncritical on elite information sources, and participates in propaganda campaigns helpful to elite interests (Herman, 1998, p. 191). They challenge the myth that the press is stubborn, difficult, persistent and present everywhere as searchers and defenders of the truth. What they state through PM is that all facets of news are structured by the influence and consensus of the elite to ensure systematic propaganda. Through this, the media defends the economic, social, and political agendas of the privileged elite groups that dominate domestic society, the government, the corporate sector and the wider international order. Effectively what they say is that the media serves and propagandises on behalf of those who control and finance them.

In oppressive regimes with monopoly powers on media, tight controls and censorship, it is obvious that the media will serve the interests of the dominant elite. In liberal

Western democracies where there is private ownership of media and a supposedly free press without any censorship, the media is seen to be competing and periodically attacking and exposing corporate and government corruption, abuse of power and misconduct, and are seen as champions of free speech and saviours of community interest. However, according to Herman and Chomsky (2008), what is not evident and what remains unexposed in the media is the limited nature of such a critique (p. 2). The propaganda model essentially looks at such disparities of wealth and power and focuses on how this has multilevel effects on mass media interests and choices. What needs to be appreciated is that the dominant media is firmly grounded in the market system which is:

...profit-seeking businesses, owned by very wealthy people (or other companies); and they are funded largely by advertisers who are also profit-seeking entities, and who want their ads to appear in a supportive selling environment. (Herman, 1998, p. 192)

2.2.1 Media serving interest of the elite

Because of the media's dependence on government and the corporate sector for news, information sources and political considerations, formation of a certain degree of solidarity is inevitable because of this overlapping interest. Governments and large non-media corporates are also the media's major revenue source and the determinant of their compliance, and overall financial survival.

The propaganda model traces the filtering process in which money and power determine what is seen fit to print after eliminating disagreements and disputes to allow the government, corporates and other elite dominant parties to "filter" their message to public. The powerful business, government entities and collective organisations use their power to control the flow of information. Such information has to pass through the following filters: ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak and anticommunist ideology (Ibid).

Herman and Chomsky (2008) sum up the process of these filters:

These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw materials of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amounts to propaganda campaigns. (p. 2)

The process is so flawless and seamless that those media personnel working with media ethics and integrity are convinced that they are objectively reporting news based on proper journalistic principles and professionalism. The constraints in these filters are built so well into the system that any alternative bases of news choices are deemed unimaginable. When Herman and Chomsky (2008) were accused of indulging in conspiracy theory, they retorted that what they had stated were the results of market forces, operating in a free market (p. L). In this environment, likeminded people who can sing in tune with the media owners are selected and promoted, and others adjust to the realities of the organisation and are attuned to working within the constraints imposed by the owners and other factors. They class this as a form of “guided market” where the goal posts are erected by the “government, the leaders of the corporate community, the top media owners and executives and the assorted individuals and groups who are assigned or allowed to take constructive initiatives” (Ibid). In some situations, media groups have their own so-called experts to give opinions on certain issues and they give credence to what the media is trying to propagate.

In a critical review, Klaehn (2002) reiterates what Herman and Chomsky (2008) stated above (p. 150). He adds that PM is not about micro-managing - it is more about the overview of how the system or rather the model works under the assumptions stated. Rai (1995) further elaborates this concept:

...microanalysis is not the task of the Propaganda Model. The model provides an overview of the system at work, making sense out of a confusing picture by extracting the main principles of the system. (p. 46)

It is not about gate keeping, which is about framing, selection and influence of editors and journalists on the actual news content (Ibid). Carter (1958) explains that this concept of gate keeping applies to the role of the desk editor and journalists in deciding what the public may read. Johnston (2000) adds further to the understanding of the gatekeeper as those

... who are screening out from your mind entire segments of reality, while reinforcing consumer-oriented message... who create the message and selectively screen out parts of the picture...who decide whether or not something will be covered...who determines who does not get to exercise freedom of speech in the public media, and who hears or is deprived of hearing all points of view on topics aired, all available information and ideas. (p. 115)

Murrell and Oakham (2008) add that “in a traditional sense, the first gatekeeper was the news editor whose role was to check information before passing it on to a reporter to investigate and examine” (p. 15). They say that the news editors had to deal with a limited number of sources which either included their own reporters or their contacts in government offices, public organisations or private companies. The people from whom these contacts were obtained were either personally known to the journalists or through their recognised public positions (Ibid, p. 16).

Klaehn (2002) further adds that PM assumes the process of control is unconscious and the filters ensure that the constraints are built into the system. Hence the media news people may be acting in good faith with goodwill and believe their principle of objectivity is in play and the professional news values are what determine the content. The “unconscious decisions” are made by people who are recruited and promoted in the news organisation because they are considered to be “right minded” (p. 151). This view is supported by Greenslade (2003) who voiced his opinion in the *Guardian Weekly* of February 27 - March 5, 2003, where he stated Rupert Murdoch argued strongly for a war with Iraq and wondered whether this explained why his 175 editors around the world backed him as well:

What a guy! You have got to admit that Rupert Murdoch is one canny press tycoon because he has an unerring ability to choose editors across the world who think just like him. How else can you explain the extra ordinary unity of thought in his newspaper empire about the need to make war on Iraq? After an exhaustive survey of the highest-selling and most influential papers across the world owned by Murdoch’s News Corporation, it is clear that all are singing from the same hymn sheet. (Greenslade, 2003, p. 22)

Under PM, media personnel internalise beliefs and attitudes which in turn influence media performance. The presumption of PM is that media personnel act in ways that effectively serve the interest of the dominant elites (Klaehn, 2002, p. 151).

2.2.2 Relevance to Fiji

Propaganda approach to media coverage suggests that there is a high degree of political manoeuvring to ensure that the interests of those in power are well protected, in fact, enhanced. The debate on this subject acquires an almost conspiracy theory status when various other authors have repeated that the tendency of journalism evolved into conforming to elite interests and avoiding antagonising the powers-that-be. In the case

of Fiji, this was supported in research conducted in news reporting after the coup of 2000 by Murdoch-owned influential and leading newspaper, *The Fiji Times* (FT) which was perceived to be supporting business functions over that of the survival of democracy. In this instance, the newspaper was found to have tended to not only to override democracy over business interests, but also to protect the vested interests of certain parties and individuals-elitist interest, be they chiefly or commercial (Kiran, 2005, p. 99).

While sounding like a partisan commentator, Herman (2002) clarifies that “the Propaganda Model was about media behaviour and performance, with uncertain and variable effects” (2002, p. 66). Without sounding immodest, he proclaims his propaganda model as being a very workable framework for analysing and understanding the mainstream media. This, he said, has greater relevance now (referring to 2002) than in 1988 when originally written.

This view has been further supported in a recent article by Mullen (2010):

...it is clear that Herman and Chomsky have substantially advanced our knowledge of the media over the last 20 years and any attempt to understand and explain the media in the 21st century should acknowledge and build upon PM. Its marginalization to date is a devastating indictment of the state of academia given that the PM is, as Chomsky argued, one of the most tested and best-confirmed models in the social science. (p. 682)

Mullen (2010) argued that as predicted by Herman and Chomsky, PM has been generally ignored within academia. The fact that, as per expectation, there is a dearth of media and communication journal articles and texts which considered the PM “gives added weight to the efficacy and legitimacy of the PM” (Ibid).

In some small way, this thesis will attempt to reduce that deficiency, as the compliance of PM will, among other theories, be gauged and measured during the content analysis chapters of this thesis which endeavours to gauge the relevance of the PM to content analysis of FT (See Chapter 28.4).

2.3 Four World’s News Values model

With his extensive knowledge of the Pacific and interest in media reflecting diversity and indigenous issues, Robie (2008) has developed a concept that would be more

relevant to the developing countries, more particularly in the Asia Pacific region. In addition, it is also relevant to the “first nations” or indigenous minorities living within developed countries but seeking an independent developed political status. Although Dr Robie’s theory was first articulated in the mid-1990s (1995, 2001), in a 2008 book chapter he explained that

...while the winds of change swept through the Third World nations in the post Second World War rush to decolonisation in the 1960s and 1970s, similar transitional ideological shifts later applied to “Fourth World” nations in the 1980s and 1990s. (Robie, 2008, p. 104)

He classifies First World as developed industrialised Western countries, Second World totalitarian states with Marxist-Leninist-Maoist or right-wing ideologies and Third World as developing nations. The concept of the Fourth World refers to relatively disadvantaged indigenous minority cultures and territories enclosed in other nations struggling for their own identity and access to the socio-political benefits of development.

The Four Worlds news model can be summed up as follows:

2.3.1 First World

Their dominant ideal is “objectivity” and their news values include the ability to report first (timeliness) on events in a relevant location (proximity) and include prominent people, celebrities, entertainment stars, royalty, sports people and anybody rich and famous involved in scandals. Recent examples include Tiger Wood’s extra marital affairs and Michael Jackson’s mysterious death which although they had little bearing on New Zealand, all local media channels were flooded with this news. Their values also include issues, things and events out of the ordinary such as weird and odd stories on people’s behaviour or fortunes. They also include elements of human interest, conflict and disaster stories.

Examples of such countries include Australia, New Zealand, United States of America, Canada and many European nations

2.3.2 Second World

Their dominant ideology is ‘collective agitator’ while their news values are emphatic on their ideology, the party and their social responsibility. Their news includes politically

correct ideologies and tells the stories of the Communist Party or another totalitarian entity and ensures that such stories are socially responsible to the country. Another important news value is education which focuses on indoctrination and preaching. While they also cover human stories, these are slanted to epitomise and enhance their ideology.

Examples of such countries today include China, Cuba and Vietnam.

2.3.3 Third World

The dominant principle of Third World is “nation building” while the dominant news values depict development, national integration and social responsibility. Their news focuses on the progress taking place in the country, its economic growth, about improvements in infrastructure and big construction and innovation. Robie (2001) suggests that the affinity is more on development news values where the concern is more with development and education (p. 12). The news also focuses on positive achievements of the nation, pride within the country and *integration and unity among the people*.

Elaborating on education and media challenges in smaller Pacific countries, Robie (1995) differentiates between journalists of developed countries like Australia and New Zealand and those in the Pacific. The former come from an environment where the belief is that obstacles could be overcome and anybody could be successful in life. On the other hand reporters from the Pacific have to battle with poverty as well as shackles of society and culture. Apart from being role models in the social context, Pacific and Third World journalists perform the task of educating while delivering information and news (p. 9). However, the news as education is used for teaching and imparting knowledge without any preaching. While being responsible, the news values also emulate those in the First World on issues such as human interest, people, conflict and disaster.

However, a caution is sounded while trying to emulate the Fourth Estate traditions of the First World countries in lesser developed economies where stability of a government could be endangered by a very vigorous and probing press. Robie (1995) cites Frank Senge Kolma, then president of the Pacific Journalists Association in 1992:

In developed societies the economic and political systems are intact, individuals come and go. The journalists can topple Nixon without worrying too much about bringing down the American system of government. In Papua New Guinea and similar young nations where the political and economic structure is not so resilient and issues are centred around individuals, knocking down the prime minister can easily bring on anarchy. The overriding concern is to help build that resilient system and only later to stand watchdog over it. (p. 12)

This strain of thought is supported by Gaunder (2006), who concurs with Robie (1995) that personalities are important in developing countries. She quotes an example nearer to home.

In the Pacific itself, we have the example of the removal of Whitlam by the Governor General but it had no effect on the system of government in Australia. By contrast, defeating the government of Ratu Mara seemed to have signalled the end of democracy and equal rights for the people of Fiji...The majority of people of Fiji, especially the indigenous Fijians, were not willing to accept change. (Gaunder, p. 20)

Since 1987, after the defeat of Ratu Mara, Fiji has not really experienced true semblance of Western democracy because the leader, Ratu Mara, around whom, or perhaps on whose shoulders the foundation of democracy rested, crumbled through his loss in elections, followed by Rabuka's coup on 14 May, 1987.

Examples of countries falling in the Third World category include Cook Islands, India, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Fiji, prior to 2006 coup by Frank Bainimarama. Since Fiji was in this category in 2000, the results of data analysis of FT will be measured against the principles of the Third World theory to gauge its fit with the performance of FT. Subsequent to military takeover of Qarase's government in December, 2006, Fiji now perhaps falls in the Second World model because of stringent media controls.

2.3.4 Fourth World

The dominant ideal of the Fourth World model is "self-determination" because it relates to those indigenous people, the majority of who reside in First World developed countries, but their living conditions are still comparable to third world lesser developed nations.

Their dominant news values seek an independent political voice, language and culture. This section of population feels marginalised hence their news push for a political view that challenges the perspectives of the mainstream media. News reflects the first language of the minority indigenous people, reaffirming a distinct cultural identity. Their education news enhances and promotes the teaching in their own distinct language. One of their news values is solidarity that is distinct from all others as they push for support of others in their situation. Even their coverage of conflicts is from their indigenous perspectives (Robie, 2008, p. 105). An example is Maori people of New Zealand. Table 1 below shows a summary of this model.

FIRST WORLD	SECOND WORLD	THIRD WORLD	FOURTH WORLD
'Objectivity' - Examples: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, European nations, US	'Collective agitator' - Examples: China, Cuba, Vietnam	'Nation building' - Examples: Cook Islands, Fiji, India, Papua New Guinea, Philippines	'Self-determination' - Examples: Koori, Maori Iwi, First Nations, Cordillera, Lumad peoples
1. Timeliness: News is now	1. Ideological significance: News is politically correct ideology	1. Development: News is progress, news is growth, news is new dams, new buildings	1. Independent voice: News spearheads a political view challenging the mainstream media perspective
2. Proximity: News is near	2. Party concerns: "The state one party (ie. communist) is news: what it does, what it thinks, and what it does not think."	2. National integration: "News is positive achievement, pride and unity"	2. Language: News is in the first language of the cultural minority
3. Personality: News is prominent or interesting people: politicians, royalty, sports heroes and heroines, hip hop artists, movie stars	3. Social responsibility: News is responsible to society in the Second World"	3. Social responsibility: News is responsible	3. Culture: News is reaffirming a distinct cultural identity
4. Unusual, odd events: News is quirky, weird, bizarre oddities outside the norm	4. Education: News is instruction; news teaches, news preaches	4. Education: News teaches, passes on knowledge	4. Education: News is teaching in own language 'nests'. Example: te reo Maori, Maohi, Bislama, Tok Pisin
5. Human interest	5. Human interest: Similar to First World but with ideological touch	5. Other values: News similar to First World human interest, people etc	5. Solidarity: News supports other indigenous minorities
6. Conflict			6. Conflict: Crises interpreted through an indigenous prism
7. Disaster			

Table 1: Four World's News Value matrix (Robie, 2008,p. 105)

2.4 Development Journalism

Eric Loo (1994), a senior lecturer at the University of Wollongong stated that many ethnic minorities hold scepticism towards the mainstream Western media and its

journalists because they have shunned the change in public discourse to include minority reactions. Loo (1994) suggests that because the change is difficult to be implemented at the newsroom level, it has to commence in journalism schools where budding journalists are exposed to issues in cross-cultural reporting and are made to appreciate the importance of widening the focus of journalism to the developmental role of journalists in a multicultural society in lesser developed environments.

Development Journalism, hereafter referred to as DJ, is more relevant to Third World countries where the sensitivity to cultural and political factors is often reflected in reporting. A better understanding of community, their needs and aspirations is achieved through interaction with people and reporting from their point of view and perspectives. In this respect, Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), through their theory of diffusion of innovation promote the philosophy of development communication. This philosophy believes in the “birds of a feather flock together” adage whereby those sharing similar beliefs and values and understandings are better able to promote communication (p. 14). What DJ calls for is appreciation of cultural diversity in a country.

A distinct characteristic of DJ is that the reporters feel part of the community; they change as well as bring change. They are not mere neutral observers who remain unmoved and unchanged by what they see and write. Sharma (2007) equates DJ to a medium of change.

The goal of development journalism is to reach people and make change in their lives. People who are well informed are able to exercise their rights and duties as citizens in meaningful ways. They are able to form opinions and sound decisions, assert their rights, and demand action. They are able to influence decision making and policy formulation. Indeed development journalism empowers people. (p. 15)

Traits of development journalists would be sensitivity to cross-cultural perspectives on issues, commitment to social, cultural and political development of the grassroots and informed conviction on social issues. DJ reports and looks at the process of change over a period of time and reports on long-term effects and trends, rather than looking at an event in isolation.

The attitude of the development journalist, who reports in the context of a multiracial society, would include, among others, the following:

- Journalism as a profession is seen as a tool of social change and development.

- The journalist places greater emphasis on inculcating multiracialism rather than freedom of expression.
- In promoting fairness, justice and an understanding of cross-cultural relations, the journalist would indulge in self-censorship.
- The journalist uses his or her position to encourage and promote social and economic change that leads to a multicultural and economically developed society.

Sharma (2007) provides an elaborated definition adding on to the points raised above.

One of the earliest models of development journalism saw mass media as a mobilizing agent for nation building, while another approach looked at journalists as government's partners in nation building. It was the second approach that was emphasized by political leaders in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia in the 1960s and 1970s. (p. 35)

Sharma (2007) however cautions about uncritical journalism or “envelopmental journalism” where journalists either support government plans and policies “peddling government propaganda in the name of journalism” or receive payments for favourable articles (p. 35). He proposes that DJ should never be used as a weapon to control the Press.

DJ calls on change in attitude and not on techniques or styles (Loo, 1994, p. 4). Those opposing DJ are not so much concerned about issues of any professional deviation but more with a paradigm shift. The mainstream journalist finds the change process of development and trend-oriented reporting more difficult to digest from their usual deviance oriented events reporting on crime, political instability, coup and similar sensational reporting. Sharma (2007) adds that a more relevant, recent and inclusive definition of DJ embraces human development with government-led development plans and calls on journalism as a profession to contribute to the welfare and development of society (p. 36).

Further elaboration on DJ, is provided by Seneviratne (2008) who was a correspondent for the Inter Press Service news agency covering Australia and the South Pacific between 1991 and 1997 and is now research director of AMIC in Singapore. He coined a new terminology, ‘Un-Western’ journalism to distinguish from western reporters who

tended to report on things from their Western perspectives. The “Un-Western” perspective was meant to show the other side of the coin. This was because he feels that many conflicts reported by Western reporters are passed off as ethnic and religious conflict while generally they are grounded in economic disparities either created as a legacy of white colonial rule or decisions made by one of the United Nations or similar international organisations which were supposed to help poorer people in the first place rather than being a reason for their increased poverty (p. 232).

As espoused by Loo (1994), Seneviratne (2008) also feels that changes have to come from classrooms of tertiary institutions teaching mass communication.

These programmes are more concerned about teaching the students to use the new media technologies to prepare them to compete with the West, but ignore the thinking process. Thus they become good, obedient ‘servants’ for global companies from the West who want to expand their services in Asia. (p. 235)

In reporting on a coup in Thailand in September, 2006, Seneviratne (2008) tells how Thaksin Shinawatra, the Prime Minister and the richest man in Thailand manipulated democracy to create a one-man rule by “buying” his opponents. A similar story about manipulated and frail democracy in Fiji failed to reach the pages of the Rupert Murdoch-owned FT, and New Zealand and Australian mainstream media. Frank Bainimarama carried out the overthrow of Qarase in a similar fashion to counteract the powerful chiefs, the dominant Methodist Church, rich business community and the government machinery which had marginalised half of Fiji’s population under the guise of democracy through divisive race-based policies and politics. Among other these included special favours and preferences based on race without means tests, race-based selection in Civil Service and statutory institution jobs and race-based discrimination in educational institutions..As Seneviratne (2008) felt about lack of proper reporting in Thailand, the author of this thesis was critical of Western journalists like Michael Field, who, with considerable influence in Fairfax Media, one of the two major newspaper chains in New Zealand, neglected to report on the other side of Fiji that would have reflected on DJ as done by Seneviratne in Thailand and Sri Lanka (Singh, July 2010a).

Daorueng (2008) concurs with Loo (1994) on the concept of DJ which, some regard as is akin to investigative journalism, but reports on a trend and not merely one spot or event report.

Journalists who wished to make a legitimate report on development issues needed a critical view to examine them... The role of journalists was not to support the state development goals without question. Instead, it was to make sure that the development process was accountable and transparent. (pp. 243-244)

On the legitimacy, balance and neutrality in reporting, Sharma (2007) sends a strong signal to journalists on the need to maintain their independence which is an essential tool for all journalists.

The news media cannot become part of any agenda, nor can they be a vehicle for sending out particular messages. Otherwise, they lose the independence they need to report the news in an objective, accurate, fair and unbiased way. (p. 54)

2.4.1 The Fiji Case

In the case of Fiji, The *Fiji Times* and Fiji Broadcasting Commission constituted two major media organisations in the post-Independence since 1970. This, however, has now changed to a multitude of newspapers, radio stations and free-to-air TV. Given this transition, Devi and Chand (2008) query whether this falls under DJ:

...what is common among these media outlets as far as news is concerned is the predominant focus on Fiji as per the perception of the elite and the ruling classes. Within this, is thrown occasional coverage of those challenging the status quo - all in the name of balance in journalism. The question that arises is whether this qualifies for development journalism. (p. 259)

In defining DJ, they mention some generic terms that are synonymous with development like growth, expansion, enhancement, advancement, progress, etc. Despite these terminologies, there is not one universally accepted definition of “development” hence they suggest that to implement any policy on coverage of DJ, perhaps a checklist of possible topics needs to be drawn up for analysis in coverage. Among others, this list would include income levels, unemployment, investment, welfare of the gender and/or ethnic segments lagging behind, law and order etc. They argue that in “Western journalism”, a demand for a free press instead of DJ involves an assumption that a free press itself inculcates democratic principles and institutions. This, however, they argue was not grounded in any firm theoretical bases, nor could it be empirically proven or otherwise. They warned that the Press, being the fourth pillar of a democracy (after legislature, the executive and the judiciary), could equally be a fourth pillar of oppression rather than democracy (Devi & Chand, 2008, p. 264).

They cautioned that the chances of a free press “cutting the wrong way” for development or democracy was higher in small countries, especially in the Pacific. This is because of the closer proximity of people, traditional ties and extended family type of acquaintances hindering operations of a completely free press. The other constraint of a free press in the Pacific is:

the intricate set of communal relationships. These relationships of blood, custom and language can re-enforce the pressures that can make the very free press that in the West would champion democracy and development, champion anti-democratic forces in the Pacific. (Ibid, p. 265)

Their solution to overcome these constraints rests with a conscious press and a well trained journalist. They argue that a conscious press needs well-trained journalists with substantial real-life experience and in-depth knowledge of development and economics. However, Robie’s (2004) second survey of April /May 2000, as outlined in his *Mekim Nius: South Pacific media, politics and education*, shows that comparatively the level of Fiji journalists lagged far behind its Pacific neighbour, Papua New Guinea. As outlined in the table below, just about half of all journalists did not have any formal training, with only a quarter of the total with undergraduate degrees or diplomas. Compared to this PNG had 81 per cent of its journalists with some tertiary qualification (p. 217) . This deficiency in journalism education and qualifications in Fiji is illustrated in Table 2 below:

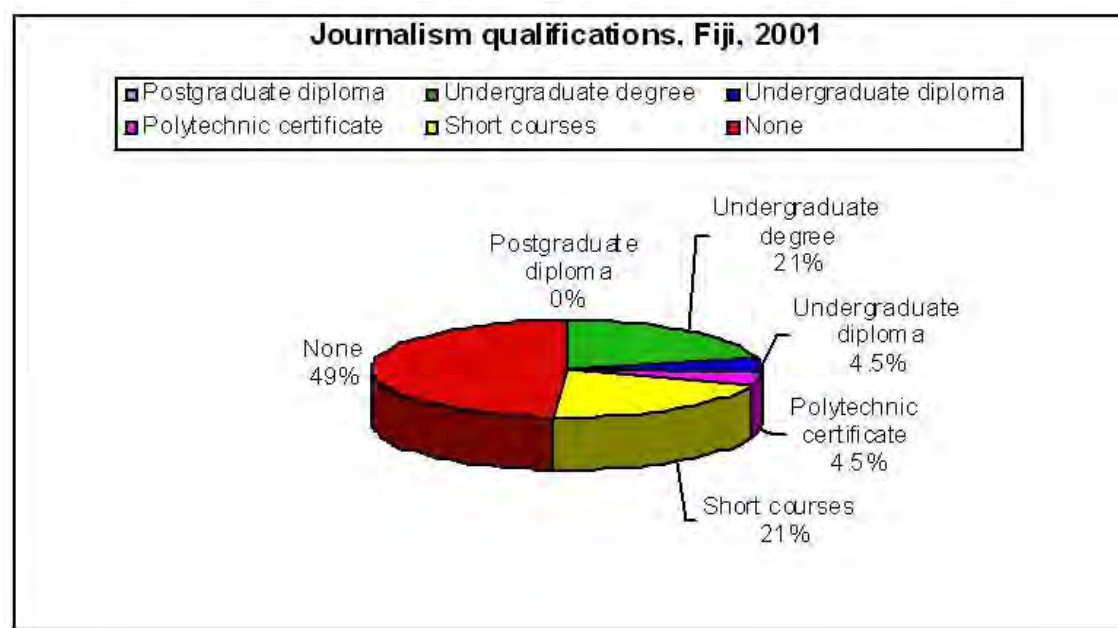


Table 2: Journalism qualifications in Fiji (Robie, 2004, p. 214)

In light of the above revelation, Devi and Chand (2008) raise a very pertinent issue about the old standards of training that may have contributed to Fiji's flawed state of reporting. L.G Usher, the late publisher of *The Fiji Times*, targeted young and inexperienced school-leavers, and the trend of untrained senior journalists teaching the rookies gave credence to the adage of "blind leading the blind" and that, according to Devi and Chand (2008) was the genesis of Fiji's journalism studies:

Such tutelage under senior journalists in the newsroom produced copies, sometimes bad but nonetheless copies, of the mentors – full of gaps, always incomplete, and carrying ethnic, cultural, gender and religious biases. This continued to see the press in Fiji and other parts of the Pacific short on the complete truth, almost always spurious and never completely in context, generally biased towards the establishment, and normally lacking in analysis. The main occupation of the press was to report and to propagate particular viewpoints. The role of the reporters was largely to gather information for re-writes by the senior writers. (pp. 267-268)

They also give credence to Herman and Chomsky's PM by repeating that the media develops to both reflect and advance the dominant ideology and development paradigm, and is influenced heavily by the socio economic and political environment in which it operates (p. 270).

Chapter 3: General Literature

Any discussion on Pacific media in general and Fiji media in particular would be incomplete without reference to the extensive work in media literacy and journalism training done by Associate Professor and the head of Pacific Media Centre at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Associate Professor, Dr David Robie. His passion for this culminated in his doctoral thesis (2003) on journalism education in the Pacific with its associated politics, policy and practice. In his quest to inculcate a higher degree of journalism education in the Pacific, his research included interviews with some 53 other Pacific educators, journalists and policy makers, including Ingrid Leary, former academic at the University of the South Pacific (USP). She supported and stressed the importance of proper training to give journalists wisdom to avoid advances of politicians, governments, commercial interests and even NGOs (Robie, 2003, p. 6).

3.1 Allegations of media bias in Fiji

As Devi and Chand (2008) had earlier alluded to Herman and Chomsky's (2008) model, Robie also cites the propaganda model which was referred to earlier in this thesis. Herman and Chomsky (2008) use this model to explain case studies of bias exhibited by the media in reporting major coverage like in East Timor, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Vietnam War by the US media (p. 32). What they state is that media can manipulate information, and in fact hide or suppress what they do not wish to tell, and can misrepresent their stories through usage of placement, tone and repetition on what they wish to impart to the audience (cited in Robie, 2003, p. 33).

Robie (2002a) gives an example of this through a work permit controversy of 1998 when there was allegation of unbalanced and unsubstantiated captive reporting by FT's controversial but influential reporter, Margaret Wise (p. 8). In writing all her stories, she neglected to interview the principals in this case - the two lecturers, namely David Robie and Ingrid Leary, who were the subject of this controversy created by some media. An analysis of the articles showed they lacked balance and objectivity in reporting and in most cases referred to unnamed spokespeople (Wise, 1998a, p. 3, 1998b). While Wise's reporting was slanted towards the case of revoking the work permit because of an alleged breach of the permit conditions, FT editorial, nevertheless tended to disagree with this discourse by saying that the threat to withdraw their (Robie's and Leary's) work permits "*is far too draconian a response*" because any

breach would be very technical, hence “*surely, an advisory letter would be sufficient – assuming a breach has occurred*” (“A draconian response, Editorial,” 1998, p. 7) . While there never was a breach and USP put out a statement to this effect, FT and Wise never published this.

A report on the same issue by the rival newspaper *Fiji’s Daily Post* ran a more balanced story, with direct comments from the concerned people and all the other parties and presented more informative background on the issues involved (Gurdayal, 1998, p. 3). It should be appreciated that Gurdayal was a journalism graduate of USP and had relatively better access to factual information. That nevertheless would not have prevented FT from obtaining all the relevant information had they the will and desire to do so. *Fiji’s Daily Post’s* editorial of the same day also backed the lecturers and praised the new journalism programme for raising the level of journalism education with realistic practical work. It also criticised the then Information Minister for presenting uninformed information in the Senate (“Attack on journalists, Editorial,” 1998a, p. 8). In actual fact, the editorials of both *Fiji’s Daily Post* and FT gave their support to the journalism educators.

The purpose in highlighting this case is to lead on to the analysis section of this thesis where this reporter, Margaret Wise, again featured just over a year after this incident (Chapter 20). This case has also been highlighted to show how media or certain individuals within the media indulge in setting an agenda which goes against the principles of journalism. In this instance the appearance was of the media and their controllers in general and FT in particular, being involved in an orchestrated and organised attack on the journalism school and in particular two of its lecturers who were ultimately cleared and freed from all allegations by the government of the day. What makes this more intriguing is that these same media people were behind the initial objection when these lecturers were appointed at USP. What this illustrates was the media’s power and influence as a protagonist.

Subsequent to Speight’s putsch in 2000, Robie (2002a) presented a paper at the Journalism Education Association (JEA) conference at Mooloolaba, Queensland (referred to as MLP), which triggered a controversy with his revelations and exposure of the media’s role in the unsettling of Chaudhry’s People’s Coalition government, as mentioned earlier in the introduction Chapter (Chapter1.1). What Robie (1999) had

also revealed earlier was that the tension between Chaudhry and FT had been a long standing one.

3.2 Chaudhry versus *The Fiji Times*

The MLP appeared to have given a balanced presentation because it began with the following quotes, both from the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator. As earlier stated, MLP appears to be the first publication, presentation and article which examined the role of the media as a factor in the 2000 upheaval in Fiji. It began thus where Fiji Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, spoke at the launch of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics on 26 October 1999:

Is *the Fiji Times* carrying the torch for people engaged in seditious activities? The newspaper needs to take a serious look at where it is headed. Is it not fanning the fires of sedition and communalism by giving undue prominence to stories that are really non-stories? (Chaudhry, 2000, pp. 137-138)

The Fiji Times rebutted thus, as reported in Robie's (2000c) MLP.

For the past six months, Chaudhry has been escalating his attacks on the media - in particular the country's most successful news organisation, *The Fiji Times* - in an effort to create a climate in which the public would be softened up for his draconian legislation. (*The Fiji Times*, 2000, p. 147)

In his launch speech, Chaudhry took an opportunity to seek accountability from those who normally sought this from others. He accused the media of having an agenda against his government:

Since taking office, my Government has occasion to be extremely disgusted by the antics of some elements in the media who have used the medium of the newspaper and television to further their own personal agenda to discredit the Government. (Chaudhry, 2000, pp. 137-138)

However, as had been stated by Robie (1999) in his Australian Press Council Fellow Report, the genesis of such a tension was much before Chaudhry came to power (p. 19). With reference to the Fiji Media Council's Complaint's Committee adjudications, Robie cited a case where the Fiji Labour Party (FLP), during the 1999 elections, complained to the Committee that FT was biased against the party in not publishing stories in response to its front page items on issues of national importance. FT argued while it strived for balance, it nevertheless was not in a position to publish daily political reports (p. 15).

The Committee ruled that the editors retained the right to make the final decision as to what was to be printed in the newspaper.

3.3 Other critics of *The Fiji Times*

Others have also been critical of this press. One notable example is Robertson and Sutherland (2001) who attributed the value-laden reporting of FT to “*the media being staffed by largely young and inexperienced reporters*” (p. 7). This issue had also been raised by Robie (2000c) in MLP where he cited one of his earlier newsroom research studies that was also included in his Australian Press Council Fellow papers (1999, p. 47) which showed that a Fiji survey conducted in February and March, 1999 (just prior to Chaudhry government coming to power), showed the median age of reporters to be 23.5, with the youngest being 18 and the oldest 50. The numbers were dominated by the 21-25 age group, unlike in PNG where the ages were spread more evenly across several ranges. The younger age was coupled with a lack of professional or educational qualifications (almost half of them lacked significant experience, with a median being at 2.5 years). A second survey on educational level has already been outlined in Chapter 2, Table 2.

All this may have contributed to poor standards of journalism. However Dr Robie also indicated that in some cases news could have been “manufactured” or “tampered with,” at the higher echelon of the newsroom editorial staff. In an email interview Robie (2001a) had with Dr Ganesh Chand, then Housing Minister in the ousted People’s Coalition Government, said:

In one case I lodged a complaint - shortly before the terrorists took over - about the reporting on the debate in Parliament on the Government guarantee for a Housing Authority loan. The motion was passed unanimously while *The Fiji Times* article led with something like the Opposition voting against it ... When I talked to the journalist who covered it, she said the article was totally twisted from what she had written and that the headline was given by a member of the senior editorial staff. There are many other examples, most of which we did not report to the Media Council. (Cited in Robie, 2001, p. 6)

This is a very serious allegation on the credibility and ethics of the news organisation and gives credence to Herman and Chomsky’s (2008) PM which says that media serves and works for those who control and finance them. In fact their views were developed

further by McChesney (1999) who blamed the media for eroding US democracy to its weak state and becomes an instrument of the wealthy and the powerful (p. 282).

The potential effect of media on the Fiji people is profound as is demonstrated by research done at USP by Nwome Obini (2000), postgraduate student from Nigeria. While the content analysis of this thesis will dwell in greater depth on this issue, it is pertinent to see the initial work done in this respect. He carried out content analysis of FT during the period of Chaudhry rule and concluded that the newspaper was very hasty and inconsistent in the way it covered issues with the Chaudhry government and previous administrations. No sooner had the Chaudhry government come to power than FT started “bombarding” the new government with rooky and inexperienced Ministers who were not even given time to settle down. Issues that kept coming, such as:

- fulfilling election promises
- appointment of Chaudhry's son as his private secretary
- land reforms
- the tea lady affair
- divisions within the Coalition;
- renovations to the Prime Minister's home
- the future of the mahogany industry;
- a national strike by mainly indigenous nurses
- the revival and destabilisation by the nationalist Taukei Movement (Robie, 2000c, p. 6).

Of all the contentious issues, perhaps the most infamous one referred to was the alleged intimate pose of AFP journalist Asha Lakhan with Chaudhry that was accidentally viewed by the PM's tea lady. Robie (2000c) cites Michael Field's reaction via email interview in which Field expressed his disappointment at the stance of the media which went along for the ride and could not decipher that it appeared to be a set up job. Perhaps the intention of the media may have been to create instability in Chaudhry's new government by exposing and highlighting immorality. Field suspected something just did not sound right in the story and the media failed to follow it up (Ibid., p. 7). Further unanswered questions remain in relation to this issue which will be addressed in the content analysis section of this thesis (Chapter 12).

Further interesting discussions with Field dwelt on the concept of democracy, which FT did not wish to abide by, despite their knowledge that the People's Coalition had an

overwhelming majority (Robie, 2000c, p. 8). This has also been noted by Duncan (2002), Kiran (2005) and Robie (2000b).

In the history of Fiji, whenever an occasion arose for FT to castigate Indians or Indo-Fijians it rarely appeared to have missed that opportunity, in fact it appeared the newspaper relished in doing so. Noting the sugar strike of 1960 by the Indian cane farmers against the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), and calls for harsher treatment of the Indian cane farmers, Lal (1997) cited from FT of 22 August, 1960, which dug up the partly dead horse of non-participation of Indians in the war efforts:

The Fiji Times concurred. Commenting on the dignity and pride with which the Fijian ex-servicemen had marched through Suva, it [FT] said: “They were not like the skulking cowards who hide in the cane fields to destroy by fire the fruits of other men’s labour... They were not self-effacing, politically ambitious, emotionally twisted grabbers after power by lies and intimidation.” It urged the government to take advantage of the ex-servicemen’s declaration to stand on the side of preservation of law and order. (p. 145)

Issues similar to those raised above are covered in greater detail in the content analysis chapters of this thesis with ‘painted’ (cut and paste) illustrations of what appeared in the actual print.

3.4 The indigenous angle

Robertson and Sutherland (2001) examine the root cause of Fiji’s political instability and contend that it rests with the indigenous question and inadvertently falls into the trap of a racial one. There is a widely held perception by the Fijians about their economic disadvantage when “Fijian economic failure” is compared with “Indian economic success” (p. xvii). The tragedy in Fiji has been that economic disadvantage among the Fijian people is viewed as a racial problem rather than an economic issue. However, the fact is that the Fijians collectively own some 90 per cent of Fiji’s land and natural resources:

The problem, then, is that after 30 years of Fijian political dominance, the aspiration of the majority of the Fijian people has not been realised. A small Fijian minority has done well, but not the bulk of the Fijian population. They feel neglected and isolated...many of the causes of Fijian disaffection lie within their own communities and institutions. Instead of addressing these matters, Fiji’s leaders have exploited the disadvantage of the Fijian masses by projecting it as the disadvantage of all

Fijian people, the elites included. They have used the rhetoric of 'the paramountcy of Fijian interests' to hide the reality of the paramountcy of elite Fijian interests. The interests of the Fijian masses have always come a distant second. The 2000 crisis brought the contradiction into focus as never before. How to resolve it is the indigenous question. It is the key question facing Fiji today. It is Fiji's unfinished business. (p. xviii)

This perception of poverty, neglect and isolation of indigenous Fijians has been the slogan and mantras for politicians indulging in divisive race-based politics. Fears of a land takeover by Indo-Fijians and the perceived disparity in prosperity levels have been the cause of much racial tension in Fiji, especially during election campaigns. This is further explored by one of the architects of the 1997 Constitution, Dr Brij Lal (2000). He argues that while using the Indo-Fijians as a red-herring for economic disparity, successive Fijian political parties took advantage of the gullibility of the Fijian masses to shade the real issue. During the 2000 Parliament takeover and hostage crisis, George Speight did likewise:

While the indigenous Fijian middle class, or at least a section of it, provided the brains for Speight's agenda, the Fijian social underclass provided the brawn... who looted, burned and trashed Suva, terrorised the countryside, and acted as human shield for Speight and his men. They could not understand why they remained behind, mired in poverty and destitution, unemployed and unemployable, while others had moved on. Without a hope, and without a future, they fell easy prey to George Speight's mesmeric rhetoric and easy solution: get rid of the Indians, revert to tradition, put Fijians in political control, and all would be well. (p. 182)

Robertson and Sutherland (2001) concur with other critics of the People's Coalition government who say that the biggest enemy of Chaudhry was Chaudhry. Even Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, the Leader of Opposition took advantage of the flawed public relations of the government to whip up fears of Indian domination and Fijian takeover:

In the final analysis none of this mattered. What mattered was public perception. Almost from the start Chaudhry fell out with the media, especially the major English daily, *The Fiji Times*... he tried to deny its expatriate editor-in-chief a work permit. When *The Fiji Times* responded critically to government policies or published stories which showed individual ministers in poor light, Chaudhry overreacted and threatened to license the media to force "more responsible" reporting. Some stories were overblown; some undoubtedly could be sourced to leaks emanating from SVT sympathisers. Part of the problem also

resulted from the media being staffed by largely young and inexperienced reporters. (Ibid, p.7)

Chaudhry also contributed to the problem through some bad choices. He placed an inexperienced politician, Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi, a vegetable farmer and close friend, in the crucial position of deputy heading the crucial Ministry of Information portfolio. This according to Robie (2001b):

...was a public relations disaster for the Government because he became locked in petty squabbles with the media rather than pursuing a proactive communications policy. (p. 8)

Robertson and Sutherland (2001) identify another mistake with Chaudhry appointing his equally abrasive son, Rajend Chaudhry, as his personal secretary; hence attracting accusations of nepotism (Chapter 11):

Neither appointee had the skills or the temperament to woo the media, and both became the subject of controversy themselves. (p. 8)

3.5 The race card in Fiji media

The race issue could never be separated from Fiji politics, and so strong has the theme of race been in Fiji, it was bound to creep up in other areas as well. As earlier cited by Robie (2001b) in his emailed interview with journalist Michael Field, the latter raised an issue which appears to have been regarded as taboo by academics and media people. This was the issue of race entering the arena of media. Field was reported as saying that it was apparent that reporting and editorial stances were frequently based on the journalist's race and own political views (p. 8). This subject was further explored by former *Fiji's Daily Post* editor, (now New Zealand-based) Jale Moala (2001, p. 125) when he elaborated about reporting difficulties, traditional constraints and cultural conflicts faced by local Fijian journalists in reporting on politicians with chiefly status or during political crisis such as Speight's putsch. Field (2002) cited Moala on the challenges in covering Pacific:

...politics in the region is so often mixed up with issues like cultural loyalties that it can become difficult for reporters to maintain impartiality and direction, especially if they are themselves part of the cultural group involved. (p. 239)

This subject of impartiality has been further explored by Gounder (2006) in her thesis on fairness of reporting the Speight coup in Fiji. She concluded:

Many of the Fijian journalists admitted it was hard to remain professional in their jobs because some had relatives inside Parliament and spending too much time inside Parliament clouded their judgement and influenced their personal opinions. (p. 75)

Discussion of race within the newsrooms has been regarded as a very sensitive issue which is rarely, if ever, discussed. This trend was broken by this author (2010) with a controversial article in the website the Pacific Scoop:

After the unceremonious departure of Vijendra Kumar at *The Fiji Times* and me from *Fiji's Daily Post*, few, if any Indo-Fijian were in charge of any news media, especially print media. For a country which has been racially segregated from British days and has been racially split through divisive racial politics, the effects of the "race card" on the news content and discourse escaped scrutiny. Nevertheless, a number of studies have found sections of Fiji media wanting in balance, fairness and lacking proper journalistic principles. Research after the Speight coup showed that large sections of the Fiji media, under the control of indigenous Fijian gatekeepers, abandoned the principles of democracy in favour of ethno-nationalism, chiefly controls and indigenous superiority. (Singh, 2010)

During and after the People's Coalition government came to power in May 1999, Netani Rika followed Russell Hunter as acting editor of FT; this was necessary because its foreign editor-in chief, Hunter was refused an extension of his work permit by the Chaudhry government. It must be noted that like elsewhere in Fiji's public service and statutory organisations, Indo-Fijians have been disproportionately represented and a similar trend was seen in the news organisations, especially in FT. This issue had been further discussed in the Pacific Scoop website by the author (Singh, April, 2010) where it was demonstrated that the gatekeepers after the 1987 coup in all major Fiji media have been non-Indo-Fijians. This issue is further explored in Chapter 26 when discussing the racial composition of FT news team.

In Brij Lal's book, *The Bittersweet*, Vijendra Kumar (2004) , former editor of FT records his experiences on perceived racism and other pressures that prompted him to depart and say "Goodbye to paradise" as his article was appropriately titled. Kumar (2004) loved Fiji and had no desire to leave. He was a sad and broken man when he left Fiji as it was the only home he knew:

Beneath the thin veneer of a civilised and enlightened society lurked serious undercurrents of racial tension and hostility...As the first locally born and the only ethnic Indian to hold the editorial reins of the 134-year old *Fiji Times*, the national daily newspaper, I was always conscious of the awesome responsibility that position imposed on me. It was always a hot seat, but after Sitiveni Rabuka's coup, the heat became almost unbearable. After suffering four years of harassment, intimidation and outright threats, I could no longer honestly and without fear discharge my professional duties. (p. 323)

The element of race and influence in Fiji affairs is further explored by Brij Lal (2000) when explaining the background of those George Speight's putsch. He called one group the "Children of 1987":

This group includes those who benefitted from the 1990 Constitution – in the award of scholarships, promotion in civil service, and the training opportunities. They were the children of privileged, sons and daughters of the well connected. (p. 182)

Lal named Speight's legal advisor Ratu Raquita Vakalalabure, Ro Filipe Tuisawau, Simione Kaitani, Ratu Timoci Silatolu among others, as examples of such people.

In such a politically and racially divided Fiji, the content control of FT was largely in the hands of Fijians. It meant that the Indo-Fijians supported the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) while the Fijians supported one of the Fijian parties, including Rabuka's SVT which had been very generous to the Fijians but less than fair to other races. FT newsroom needs to be examined in this context, especially where Simione Kaitani, who has been identified as a "Child of 1987", an independent Fijian Member of Parliament, together with divisive forces such as Apisai Tora, Taniela Tabu and Maika Qarikau got unbridled access to the front pages of FT. These personalities and issues are covered in detail in the content analysis chapters of this thesis (Chapter 24).

Lal (2001), while having views similar to Robie (2000c) and Robertson and Sutherland (2001), labels Chaudhry's leadership style as "pugnacious, forged during his long years in the country's trade union movement (p. 11).

This was compounded by what Lal (2001) calls "the politics of race" that has been dividing the country and nationalists like Apisai Tora, who he calls the "mercurial chameleon of Fiji politics", was fanning the racial card to destabilise Chaudhry's new and inexperienced Cabinet. Tora's own party, misnamed as the Party of National Unity, was Chaudhry's coalition partner. Tora had told Radio NZ that "Indians came as slaves,

and they are now our masters” (p. 12). Tora, racial agitation and industrial relations issues are covered in greater detail in the content analysis chapters (Chapters 9, 10, 17 and 24).

On the issue of race, commentators are divided. Trnka (2008) in her research on political violence in Fiji during Speight coups observes that various parties involved in 2000 coup employed racially inflammatory rhetoric to rally support and because of this a coup that was not fundamentally motivated by racial antagonism nonetheless opened up a space for anti-Indian violence (p. 35). Teaiwa (2000) feels that the coups in Fiji have eroded Fijian leadership and their social order and the problem is not inter-racial but intra-racial. She states that the fight was between the Fijians but given wrong meaning to be a problem of race. She blames the Fijian leadership for Fiji’s problems.

The impoverishment and disaffection of indigenous Fijians are not a result of 12 months of leadership of an Indo-Fijian. It is the result of 30 fraught years of modern indigenous Fijian leadership that have sacrificed the economic and cultural well-being of a people for the advancement of a few. (p. 34)

On the other hand, Woodward (2001, p. 53), Balewaqa (2001, p. 30) and Samisoni (2001, p. 41) regard Speight’s coup as a racial problem between the Indians and the Fijians and they argue the Fijians need supremacy over the Indians. Mere Tuisalalo Samisoni (2001), who was one of Qarase’s Members of Parliament in the SDL-deposed government from Lami constituency, blames multiracialism as the cause of marginalisation of the indigenous people:

Today the indigenous Fijians are still marginalised...Loss of identity and dignity leads to social disintegration which explains why indigenous Fijians, in 1998, make up 80 per cent of the population in prison compared to 51 per cent racial distribution in the general population. (pp. 40-42)

This is challenged by a former Fiji journalist and now Oxford University-based Indo-Fijian academic, Victor Lal (2001), who reminds us about the violence of *girmit*, the indenture which still haunts Indo-Fijians some nine decades after it ended:

Their history, however, will record that their own displacement from British India in 1879 prevented the dispossession of the Fijian in colonial Fiji following the Deed of Cession in 1874. Indeed, ironically, the indentured Indian was uprooted specifically to prevent the disintegration of the Fijian way of life. (p. 114)

Lal (2001) cited another Fiji academic and former Parliamentarian, Dr Satendra Nandan, who was seized by Rabuka in the first 1987 coup and had commented about the displacement of Indians:

Thus the displacement of the Indian prevented the dispossession of the Fijian. This may be the lasting and most significant contribution of the peasants from India. Without this the Fijian might have lost much of his land, and more tragically, his self-respect. (p. 115)

Self-respect was lost during the 2000 Speight's putsch where Dobell (2001) agrees with Lal (2001) and Teaiwa (2000) that this was not about the Indians and the Fijians, but was a fight between indigenous Fijians:

Along with the carnage inflicted on the economy, the greatest damage was done to indigenous Fijian institutions. In 1987, the prestige of the Great Council of Chiefs and the army – as expression of Fijian power – was enhanced. This time, George Speight opened splits in the Fijian community, exposing tensions between regions, rivalry among the chiefs and confused loyalties of the army. (p. 131)

The once-respected and revered institution, the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) was also a casualty of indigenous power struggle. The GCC's narrow partisan stance that lent legitimacy to usurpation of power by Rabuka in 1987 had led to its politicisation. Speight also used Indians as the common enemy to assemble people to oppose the Chaudhry government. This did not escape the gaze of Yash Ghai (2001), who like Lal (2001), also observed the sad state of the once revered Fijian institutions:

He (Speight) has pitted high chiefs against high chiefs, the Great Council of Chiefs against the ethnic Fijian army, one confederacy against another. He, a commoner, has torn to shreds the ideology of traditionalism - all in the name of communal unity and hegemony. One of the many lessons that can be learnt from this saga is that the modern preoccupation with "identity" and "difference" as building blocks of political order needs to be approached with caution. (p. 38)

Chapter 4: Previous media research

4.1 Lynda Duncan

Lynda Duncan (2002) conducted research on the editorials of *The Fiji Times* and *Fiji's Daily Post* during the period between 1 May, 2000 and 31 July, 2000, as these were seen as two local papers reporting on Fiji, employing journalists who were home-grown and locally trained and were issuing political commentaries in the form of editorials. This was the period immediately preceding George Speight's coup on 19 May 2000 and the subsequent events that saw the taking of politicians as hostage, their release and the political instability surrounding the crisis.

She pointed out that during that period Netani Rika was acting editor of FT, the foreign-owned newspaper which is part of the Rupert Murdoch global news conglomerate (p. 11). This has since changed because of Fiji's new media decree that requires at least 90 per cent local ownership. FT was bought by the local Motibhai Group of Companies in September 2010. As has been mentioned earlier, Russell Hunter was refused an extension of his work permit by the Chaudhry government which had a bitter running battle with the media in general and FT in particular. One notable incident was during the launch of the Fiji Media Council's Code of Conduct where as Prime Minister, Chaudhry was very critical of reporting standards and the attitude of FT towards his government and accused it of "fanning the fires of sedition and racism" (Duncan, p. 11). In his speech, Chaudhry (2000) had singled out one particular reporter, Margaret Wise, that Robie (2002a, p. 8) also had an encounter with, as detailed earlier. In speaking about unnecessary and unwarranted coverage given to nationalist union leader Taniela Tabu, he accused *The Fiji Times* for harbouring an agenda:

There have been a number of articles on Taniela Tabu breathing fire and brimstone along racial lines, making all kinds of threats and allegations not backed by facts. Yet *The Fiji Times* continues to pose this man whose own credibility is questionable, having frittered away \$4 million of union membership funds that he can't explain, as the saviour of the Fijian civil servants. How come the only reporter present was Margaret Wise of *The Fiji Times* since none of the other media reported anything on this meeting. It makes me wonder whether there is not a conspiracy at work here between that particular reporter and these anti-government elements. (Chaudhry, 2000, p. 137)

The above issues, including Wise and Tabu are viewed in greater detail in the analysis chapter later.

Field, Baba and Nabobo-Baba (2005) shed additional light on the Wise story:

The Rupert Murdoch-owned *Fiji Times* decided, almost by default and as a result of one particular reporter that they were going to get rid of Chaudhry. Reporter Margaret Wise tore into Chaudhry with many an unsourced story which the paper had no qualms about publishing. What was known to the newspaper, but not shared with readers and now a matter of court record, was that she was also Rabuka's lover and had a child by him. (p. 62)

This subject was mentioned in his recent book by Field (2010) where he clarified any doubts on this matter:

Rabuka fathered a boy with Wise and then denied it was his...`A DNA test revealed Mr Rabuka was 99.999 percent[certain] to be the likely father of the 18-month-old boy,' *The Fiji Times* said. The court found he was the father and he was ordered to pay F\$30 a week. (p. 179)

It is incidents and situations like this that gave rise to the term "skirt journalism" that was used by Robie (2000c, p. 10) in MLP. The ethical and conflict of interest issues in this regard are raised later in Chapter 20 on Margaret Wise.

Kiran (2005) who conducted content analysis of FT subsequent to the takeover by Speight saw many deficiencies in the news coverage. She is critical of the newspaper which portrayed Speight as a crusader for the Fijian race, wresting away power for the Fijian race for preservation of their future.

She also named Margaret Wise, who had already been earlier cited for waging problems (Robie, 2000c) as one of FT reporters who wrote stories that were aimed at consolidating the myth that the takeover was an ethnic conflict and not provincial rivalry between the confederacies. Wise continued to run stories which kept on emphasising inter-ethnic conflict as the reason.

Going back to the research conducted by Duncan (2002), her hypothesis proposed that:

The Fiji Times represented and reinforced the ruling class ideology in Fiji, a ruling class who were determined to consolidate political power by promoting the role of chiefly elite and thereby disguising the tension caused by class relations in society. (p. 12)

It also declared that the Speight crisis happened because Fijians did not trust an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister to deliver security of Fijian rights and guarantee of Fijian leadership. She added that the editors of FT as well as *Fiji's Daily Post* during the crisis were Fijians (referred to as indigenous race). The views of the Fijian editors appeared to have been filtering in the newspapers. The papers, especially FT, took it for granted that the Fijian chiefs had legitimacy to provide leadership role in a crisis situation, ignoring the Indo-Fijians in the process. Duncan (2002) states that it was evident that both FT and *Fiji's Daily Post* did not see a leadership role for the Indo-Fijians, because they proposed that the chiefs should rule for *all* the people of Fiji (p. 16). She further added that:

...editors and publishers can use their position to ensure that the dominant ruling interest get their message to the public. Protection of the chiefs' leadership role in government attempts to consolidate the position of the chiefs and the GCC in society and to consolidate the power base of the newspaper owners. (Duncan, 2002, p. 18)

This concept of legitimising the role of non-elected and politically-aligned chiefs over all the people of Fiji matches Herman and Chomsky's (2008) Propaganda Model theory which stipulates that media is dependent on the elites, and participates in propaganda campaigns helpful to elite interests(p.2).

This shows the tendency of journalism to conform to elite interests while avoiding antagonising the powers-that-be. In the case of Fiji, this was also supported by Kiran's (2005) analysis which showed the newspaper tended to support not only the business functions but also the ruling chiefly elite over that of the survival of democracy (p. 99).

The racial slant of the paper was also noted by Duncan's (2002) findings where both FT and *Fiji's Daily Post* supported democracy, as long as the Fijians and the GCC dominated leadership ruled Fiji (p. 18). The papers, while supporting democracy tended to favour Fijian self-interest over the political system and mandate of the people. The papers failed to support the huge mandate of the people for return of Chaudhry to power. This was a clear reflection of the racial skew of the papers' editors and senior

and influential journalists and their links to the ruling elite who supported Fijian leadership for Fiji to move ahead (Ibid, p. 22).

Duncan's conclusion emulates criticism by Chaudhry of FT and supported by sections of the academic community and the media industry, including Robie (1999, 2001a) and Field (Robie, 2001a). She concluded that:

Neither editor (of *The Fiji Times* and *Fiji's Daily Post*) provided any in-depth analysis of the causes of the political crisis nor related it back to historical events. Instead, both papers tended to write sensational statements rather than promoting audience thought. They both neglected to place events in a social or political context...Both papers reinforced the colonial legacy that Fijian chiefs are the rightful rulers of Fiji, emphasising that Fiji, and this presumably means Fijians, was not ready for a multiracial constitution. (Duncan, 2002, pp. 23-24)

She was critical of the standard of the editorials and the paper's understanding of the Constitution and their lack of understanding of the special protection accorded in the 1997 Constitution, the process of Constitutional change and the inability of any Prime Minister to be able to change things at their whim, hence the fact that an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister was not a situation that should agitate the Fijian public (p. 25).

4.2 Susan Sandhya Kiran

Susan Sandhya Kiran, a postgraduate student and formerly foundation journalism double major graduate, at USP, Suva, Fiji, submitted an unpublished thesis in 2005 that conducted an interpretive approach to content analysis of FT to:

examine the latent meaning in the May 2000 crisis reportage of *The Fiji Times* in order to reveal the presence of bias towards the rebel cause and the subsequent promotion of the political and economic agenda of a group of elites under the cover of ethnic conflict. (Kiran, 2005, p. 19)

Analysis by Kiran shows that *The Fiji Times* had elevated Speight to the level of Ratu Mara and gave him prominence that he did not deserve while labelling Mahendra Chaudhry as "deposed Prime Minister" when he was still the prime minister. This

...gave implicit legitimacy not only to the rebel group but also to the illegal takeover of government. (Kiran, p. 28)

She also cited the author of this thesis, then publisher of *Fiji's Daily Post*, who presented an unpublished paper at a Fiji Media Watch workshop in Suva, Fiji:

For the Indo-Fijians it was heart breaking to realise that few in the media sought to present the problems facing them during the most critical phase of the standoff. If they were beaten, it made good footage, but the theft of their property, wanton slaughter of their animals and the burning and looting of their homes somehow did not qualify for closer scrutiny. Horrific violence and rape against the Indo-Fijian women went unreported. (p. 73)

As analysed by Kiran, the imbalance in representation of the plight of Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians perpetuated the myth that the indigenous community was the victim. This victim-portrayal had been the trend of FT over the 56 days of hostage crisis despite the fact that the 1997 constitution adequately protected all their rights.

In her analysis, Kiran appears to have inadvertently brought in the race issue of the newsrooms, which has been seen as a very sensitive and volatile topic for discussion. In explaining about the newspaper's agenda setting effects and its ability to focus public attention on a few issues to the virtual exclusion of others, she observed that *Fiji's Daily Post* had a particularly obvious anti-rebel stance throughout the crisis. Perhaps unbeknown to her, this author, an Indo-Fijian, happened to be its publisher at that time while it also had senior Indo-Fijian reporters with considerable qualifications and experience. Compared to FT during the reporting of the crisis, *Fiji's Daily Post* had a better racial balance in its organisation and newsroom than FT, which was dominated by Fijians and non- Indo-Fijians at all levels.

Kiran has summed it up well:

In Fiji, the affiliation between journalists and prominent players in the political, social and economic scenes is also due to the presence of a traditionally close-knit society. During times of political crisis, local journalists are invariably drawn towards various sides, and the resulting bias comes across in their writings. (p. 80)

Hence, Fijian reporters were continuously being heavily influenced by Speight about the indigenous cause and it was bound to affect their writing. One reporter told Kiran that she ended up feeling for Speight's cause but not his method, and this was reflected in her stories (p. 81). It was such a situation and environment that encouraged an atmosphere of ethnocentrism and racial feelings within journalism. An attempt will be made to explore this further in the content analysis chapters.

Kiran (2005) also outlined the bad relationship that the Chaudhry government had with media which was cordial in the beginning. This later became hardened through the

Hunter work permit fiasco as had already been covered by Duncan (2002) earlier. This developed into a “media war” with FT which routinely highlighted all alleged wrongdoing by the government which also routinely retaliated, with a novice media team and without any effective media strategy. FT was more concerned with projecting a certain perception of Chaudhry which the newspaper itself capitalised on, treating him as an Indo-Fijian trying to disinherit the Fijians (Kiran, 2005, p. 82). We will dwell more on this later in the content analysis chapters.

Peter Thomson, (1999) who was Fiji’s Governor General’s Permanent Secretary during the 1987 coup, provides an explanation for such a stance by the newspaper. When there was debate on some form of censorship during the extreme national crisis, he felt that it was not unusual for governments to impose some form of controls on media. The motivation for such an action was not suppressing the truth, but it was what the government saw as potentially inflammatory press provocation:

How do you reconcile the commercial demands of the empires of Murdoch and Packer for drama and controversy with a desperate national need for calm and consensus? (p. 137)

This shows the government urge for the media to follow the principles of development and responsible journalism from those early days of Ratu Mara’s rule over three decades ago. Desire for such a press does not appear to have changed even today.

4.3 Padmini Gaunder

In a working paper that Gaunder (2006) did for the University of Auckland, she took Fiji as an example to show how the media, in this instance, FT, generated animosity and tension between the major ethnic groups there, leading to ethnic conflict. Through a historical perspective, she argues that this newspaper (FT) was the only daily newspaper in Fiji for about a century and added that:

This newspaper represented the views and interests of a small group of vested European commercial interests in the country and deliberately caused ethnic divisions by influencing the perceptions of indigenous Fijians towards the immigrant Indians. The newspaper helped to implant fear in the minds of the indigenous population of domination of the country by the immigrant community. This fear led to suspicions and slowly it caused tensions and finally ethnic conflict. (p. 1)

On the racial divisiveness of the newspaper, she feels that it was founded in the newspaper's history:

The Fiji Times had started its anti-Indian propaganda in its very early days itself, during the indenture period in the colony (1879-1920). Throughout the indenture period, there was often violence in the cane fields, resulting sometimes in murders of the overseer by the labourers. *The Fiji Times* invariably described these incidents as cold-blooded murder and depicted the Indians as a mysterious race of criminals to whom violence came naturally. (p. 8)

What never got told in the newspaper was that on most occasions, the violence was provoked by the overseers. She elaborates that until 1920, the white settlers regarded both Indians and Fijians as the same group of dark skinned people who were considered inferior to them. It was only after the 1920 and 1921 strikes by Indian workers that they befriended the natives and started turning them against the Indians.

The Fiji Times became their main tool for conveying this pro-Fijian/anti-Indian stand. It deliberately disseminated, through headlines, news stories, letters to the editor and editorials news about Indians that would cause unease in the minds of the Fijians. (Gauder, 2006, p. 8)

A historian and acknowledged author on early Indian history in Fiji, Dr. K. L. Gillion (1977) noted similar racial slurs in FT of those early years against Fiji Indians. Citing an incident in 1922 when an Indian deputation was visiting Fiji, the following letter appeared in the then *Fiji Times and Herald* of 1 March, 1922:

I would say that 99 per cent of the Europeans in Fiji and the Fijians are loyalists and the handing over of Fiji to evil-smelling, treacherous, non-educated, garlic-eating Indians would be one of the greatest crimes in the history of the British Empire and an event which would possibly meet with some opposition. (p. 81)

Gillion (1977) also recorded instances when the newspaper called for deportation of Indian leaders to India (p. 184), used derogatory words against Indians (pp. 35, 81), was accused of reinforcing "apprehension about Asian penetration of the South Pacific" (p. 39) and expressed contempt on celebrating jubilee, in 1929, of the arrival of the first Indian settlers and declaring of 15 May as a public holiday (p. 131). In the issue of January 29, 1929, *The Fiji Times and Herald* wrote:

Fiji does not require permanent settlers of the Indian type. Her lands, her climate are for Europeans who can employ what labour they require. (Ibid. p. 116)

The purpose in drawing attention to the historical role, tone and stance of FT is to compare with what critics had said in more recent articles and research reports to show that things do not appear to have changed in some fourteen decades of its presence in Fiji. The newspaper was established in Fiji in 1869 – exactly ten years before the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers from India. Gillion (1977), Prasad (2004) and Naidu (2004), among others, have written widely about the atrocities that these indentured labourers went through the hands of British and Australian overseers, the breach of basic human rights, and flouting of international laws took place under the nose of a supposedly free press. However, FT never appeared to have taken a stand on the injustices meted out to these labourers. Gillion (1977) talks about bullying, filthy plantation lines (accommodation) where labourers were penned like animals, people broken by diseases, the beatings and the use of law to subjugate these people:

...the rough young Australian overseers... used the Indian women...the system of European dominance... the law courts unconsciously favoured the articulate employer against the bewildered or ignorant labourer...the Indians remembered the deceit, the slave-driving drudgery, and the degradation and vice; the CSR, the planters, and Europeans generally saw the Indians as coloured labour force to be kept under. (pp. 5-6)

All this happened under the watch of FT which not only remained silent and uncritical of the elite, but in fact, as stated by Gillion (1977, p. 116), became their mouthpiece. As indicated by Herman and Chomsky (2008, p. 2) and further reiterated by Herman (1998, p. 191), the media depends on the elite, remains uncritical of them and in fact participates in propaganda campaigns helpful to elite interests. These elites, in the case of Fiji, meant the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), the Europeans and the British government. Studies in more recent times suggest that things have not changed much over the century. The elites have now changed to the Eastern Chiefs, the elite Fijians and the rich business community.

4.4 Nwomye Obini

A study undertaken by a Nigerian student Nwomye Obini (2000) of USP's Centre for Development Studies, attempted to analyse the contents of FT during the time the Chaudhry government was in office to determine whether the paper helped in causing instability. (Obini is now a teacher, based in Malaita, Solomon Islands). He set out to determine responsible journalism, fair and objective criticism of various governments by the newspaper and identify balanced editorials.

In his study, Obini concluded that:

The People's Coalition had always regarded *The Fiji Times* as a pain in the neck.... there is a clear difference between informing the public in a non-partisan, unbiased manner and waging a war of destabilisation. Without giving the People's Coalition time to settle down in office, *The Fiji Times* started hammering on promises made by the People's Coalition during election campaign. Also some sensitive issues were blown out of proportion and given more attention than they deserved; they were amplified in the front pages, and regularly given prominence in the editorials. (p. 59)

Obini felt that FT acted irresponsibly (p. 61). He felt that it was the responsibility of the media to educate people and exercise restraint as the Chaudhry government was very new and they were still settling down and had inherited most of the problems. On the nurse's strike, he suggested that the paper should have encouraged nurses not to go on strike as the People's Coalition Government had inherited the work grievances and low pay from previous governments and they were prepared to address the long outstanding issues (p. 16).

He concluded that the media's role in informing people about what was happening in the country and expose the irregularities or misdemeanours in government and other establishments should be carried out responsibly: "To make a mountain of a problem, especially when one section of a society considers it sensitive or sacred amounts to fanning the embers of hatred and destabilisation" (p. 61).

4.5 Christine Gounder

Another study on media reporting during crisis was done by Christine Gounder (2006) who examined the role of *The Fiji Times*, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Australian* during the May 2000 coup in Fiji to determine the fairness of their news coverage and suggest solutions for the future.

She concluded that most comments about media coverage of the 2000 events have been negative and there appeared to be some evidence of the Stockholm syndrome having an impact (p. 75). This syndrome refers to psychological phenomenon where the hostages show or have positive feelings towards their captors. This term originated consequent to a bank robbery in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden in 1973 where a number of hostages or victims became emotionally involved with their captors and even defended them after a week of captivity. However this subject appears not to have been dealt in

any depth in the research to say with certainty if this had been the case. This is because many of the local journalists, who were mostly indigenous Fijians, also reported being influenced by their social and cultural affiliations.

Many of the Fijian journalists admitted it was hard to remain professional in their jobs because some had relatives inside Parliament and spending too much time inside Parliament clouded their judgment and influenced their personal opinion. (p. 75)

Hence external elements appeared to have affected the neutrality and balance of the reporters. She also found through her analysis that FT lacked analytical and investigative stories and ran emotive headlines with biased stories that sympathised with the coup makers. This trend had earlier been reported by Duncan (2002, p. 24). Gounder (2006) concluded that, in fact, all the media studied gave credibility and legitimacy to Speight (Ibid., p. 79).

4.6 Pramila Devi

In a study over a decade earlier, sociologist Pramila Devi (1992) analysed the election of 1992 under a racist Constitution and found that the trends reported earlier of FT in particular, together with *Fiji's Daily Post*, had been there for a long time.

She found that the two papers tended to support an ideology which was shared by the Great Council of Chiefs, the then (Rabuka's) military and the chief's party, the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT). Hence the PM had been prevalent in Fiji media for some time now. This same ideology was also shared by a large segment of the Fijian population. Given the racially skewed composition of the newsrooms, this ideology was also shared by the Fijian reporters and the editors of the paper.

Devi's 1992 survey of the two dailies, FT and the *Fiji's Daily Post* showed that:

... those political parties which accepted, directly or indirectly the decreed [racist 1990] constitution received the most coverage and attention. (p. 30)

Fiji Labour Party (FLP) which was against the racist 1990 constitution received lesser coverage than the parties that supported it. However, as soon as "the FLP decided to enter the Parliament and endorse the military coup leader as the Prime Minister, the FLP began getting relatively better attention than the National Federation Party (NFP) (p. 30).

Devi (1992) found that the papers supported an unequal and non-democratic system as long as they filled parliamentary rules of an election, irrespective of inherent inequalities. She concluded that her findings showed that as long as an elected parliament was in place, it did not matter if half the country's population would be under perpetual political domination by the other half. It appears this trend did not fade when studies were undertaken in later years.

Conclusion of a similar study some thirteen years later (since 1992) by Kiran (2005) showed that after two constitutions, five elections and a civilian coup, the position of *The Fiji Times* had not changed. Devi's (1992) conclusion above and Kiran's (2005) had a familiar note about them:

Analyses and comments on *The Fiji Times* indicate that the newspaper showed a close affinity towards indigenous Fijian rights and interests, as well as towards parties that displayed nationalistic tendencies or appeared to support nationalism. There are clear indications that the newspaper is biased towards indigenous Fijians and it tended to project arguments and discussions aimed at protecting indigenous Fijian interests. (Kiran, 2005, p. 90)

4.7 A summary of this chapter

The studies on FT that have been covered above have indicated that despite the passage of time, the partisan approach of the newspaper towards the elite classes has not changed. Times have changed; from Gillion's (1977) reporting of the 1860s to Kiran's (2005), Obini's (2000) and Gounder's (2006) studies in the new millennium. Even the elites have changed; from the CSR, the British government and the Europeans to the indigenous Fijian chiefs, the Fijian elites running the government and the business community. What has not changed is the credibility of the Propaganda Model which remained steadfast in giving credence to Herman and Chomsky's (2008) theory on how the media becomes, and in case of FT, continues to be the lapdog and mouthpiece of the elites.

The chapters following - the actual content analysis will demonstrate whether *The Fiji Times* has changed in the new millennium.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 The literature

Robson (1993) equates “documentary analysis” with content analysis, and he includes “book, newspaper or magazine, notice, letter” and so on in documents and even goes further to “include non-written documents such as films and television programmes, pictures, drawings and photographs” in this category (p. 272).

Instead of directly observing, or interviewing, or asking someone to fill a questionnaire for the purpose of our enquiry, we are dealing with something that was produced for some other purpose. This is an example of an unobtrusive measure; that is, the nature of the document is not affected by the fact that you are using it for the enquiry (Ibid).

He also classes it as an “indirect” method which we may also refer to as a secondary research instead of a primary one. Robson (1993) likens content analysis to “codified common sense.” He enumerates the steps needed in doing content analysis as follows:

- 1) Start with a research question-this means getting answers to questions applied.
- 2) Decide on a sampling strategy-this is to ensure the task is reduced to a manageable level.
- 3) Define the recording unit- this may vary from selecting themes, particular words or number of stories on a topic. The coding here could include positive/negative or favourable/unfavourable stories.
- 4) Construct categories for analysis, among others, this may include subject or issue, direction, values and so on.
- 5) Carry out the analysis (Ibid., p. 277).

Walsh (2005) defines content analysis as:

....a specialised example of qualitative analysis. It is used to examine explicit and implicit messages in documents, most often through the location and analysis of key words or phrases...In addition to analysis of key words and phrases, attention may also be given to the *prominence* given to the subjects researched. (p. 243)

He argues that while some may believe that qualitative data need not be analysed in a rigorous manner, he disagrees. While appreciating that “the rigorous analysis of qualitative data is extremely difficult and requires great skills by the researcher,” Walsh (2005) feels that qualitative data should also be subjected to rigorous analysis (p. 243). However, Prasad (1996), in his Master’s thesis at USP, cited and used a broader and more flexible definition put forward by Stone et al. (1966), where content analysis is defined as “any research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics with text” (p. 44). For content analysis technique to be systematic and objective, it has to closely adhere to predefined rules. It is this broader definition that will be applied in this thesis as well.

The advantage of content analysis is that it can be conducted in a manner which observes or analyses without being observed. It also leaves itself open to re-analysis or further reliability checks because, in our case, the data, the newspaper content, is a permanent record in its permanent form (Ibid., p. 280). Wimmer & Dominick (1997) also concur with the steps followed by Robson (1993). However they give an alternative that instead of a research question, hypotheses, based on existing theory, prior research, and practical problems or as a response to changing social conditions, could be used (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p. 116). They emphasise that content analysis, as a method of studying and analysing communication, entails three important components or manner in which it needs to be undertaken (Ibid, p. 112). They are: systematic, objective and quantitative that removes all elements of personal bias and falls in the category of “codified common sense” as categorised by Robson (1993).

The usefulness of the methodology and steps outlined above has been demonstrated by content analysis research conducted by some scholars. In order to ascertain the ways a metropolitan publication and a regional daily covered the campaign of the 2006 Queensland state elections, Maguire (2007) conducted content analysis of *The Courier-Mail* and the regional daily *The Gold Coast Bulletin*. He started off with the research question as stipulated by Robson (1993), but this was more in the form of five hypotheses that were arrived at after some earlier research on this general subject. He picked the coverage from the first day of the election to election day (Maguire, 2007, p. 113). He was out to determine the coverage for respective parties as well as candidates and the subjects that were covered. The coding procedures used were:

A sentence-by-sentence analysis ascertained all issues and candidates (including political parties) mentioned in the news story/editorial. Majority sentence direction then determined the primary issue and candidate of the item and the attitudinal direction (or tone) of the story towards the primary candidate. If there were an equal number of mentions about two or more candidates, the story was coded as being neutral (Ibid).

In addition, Maguire (2007) also picked three dimensions of “favourable”, “unfavourable” and “neutral”. The majority of positive and negative references determined the two extremes while an equal number of positives and negatives or with no clear direction rendered the coverage as “neutral.” On subjects covered, the author picked issues such as “justice”, “recreation and media”, “health and welfare” and so on. All the coding in this study was done by the author who analysed the results on a manual basis and recorded them on tables and analysed them to answer the questions raised in the hypotheses.

Another content analysis on reportage of the 2003 Iraq war was conducted in a similar fashion by Rafeeq (2008) who set out to compare New Zealand’s three dominant newspapers’ dependence on global news agencies with other content providers , and to ascertain the extent of US and coalition domination of the news agenda (p. 51). He explored, through content analysis,

how the three main daily newspapers of New Zealand – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – covered the military conflict between March 21 and May 22, 2003. It does so by examining the themes, direction and orientation of news sources, and the extent to which international news agencies were part of the war journalism discourse in New Zealand. (Rafeeq, 2008, p. 52)

Rafeeq (2008) followed the steps outlined by Robson (1993) in determining the research question or the hypotheses, the sampling strategy, recording and analysing units and codes. He coded the news coverage according to a series of categories, which, among others included direction and orientation of the war coverage and main themes of coverage. In determining direction and orientation, the methodologies as suggested and used by Robson (1993) and Maguire (2007) were used. This entailed analysing content based on “favourable,” “unfavourable” and “neutral” categories and also determining them in light of their manifest and latent contents (Rafeeq, p. 55). All these were done manually without the aid of any computerised analytical tools. A similar American study had also been reported by Kepplinger (1989) who, in giving an

example of content analysis, used the tools of “negative”, “positive” and “neutral” as has been used by the above studies of Maguire (2007) and Rafeeq (2008). In this American study, it was reported that the human coders were utilised and there were two pronged use of the data: it was analysed for the number of times a particular topic or subject had been used and was also assessed for the meaning they were intended to portray (Kepplinger, 1989, p. 179).

Pros and cons of usage of computerised and human tools has been discussed in an AUT University doctoral research conducted on content analysis of intellectual capital reporting for businesses (Steenkamp, 2007). This study reported that while computerised content analysis had its advantage, the human coded content analysis (p. 170), as reported above by Maguire (2007) and Rafeeq (2008), have their advantages (Steenkamp, 2007, p. 170). Morris (1994) acknowledged that while computer analysis has the advantage of being reliable through its uniformity and can be applied economically on a large quantity of data, they have their limitations. Firstly, this includes lack of natural language processing capability of the computer software, which may not be competent to judge the meaning that may have been intended by the news writer or the author in the broader context, or in a metaphorical sense. Simply analysing words on the number of times they have been used may not clearly give the meaning or analysis that may have been intended. Secondly, the person conducting research may not be able to give “an exhaustive listing of key words for a category that by nature is indeterminate” (p. 925). Thirdly, it is the inability of the software to refer to the words backwards or forwards that may have been used elsewhere in the text. Finally, human coders are required to grant validity and reliability to the computer-analysed texts (Ibid, p. 926).

This is supported by Krippendorff (2004), who adds that:

Where text and images are involved, or more generally, where the phenomena of interest to analysts are social in nature, mechanical measurements have serious shortcomings that only culturally competent humans can overcome. Notwithstanding the many advances that have been made in computer-aided text analysis in recent years, in most content analysis the researchers at some point find they need to fall back on human interpretive abilities. (p. 126)

This issue is given further credence by Wimmer & Dominick (1997) who argue that subjectivity inherent in human beings cannot be entirely divorced from content analysis:

Perfect objectivity is seldom achieved in a content analysis. The specification of the unit of analysis and the precise makeup and definition of relevant categories are areas in which individual researchers must exercise subjective choice. (p. 112)

It is for this reason that the data in this thesis will be analysed through human coding and the format will be based on the general steps outlined by Robson (1993) and concurred by Prasad (1996), Walsh (2005), and Wimmer and Dominick (1997). The coding used will be in the format and general themes already applied earlier by Kiplinger (1989), Maguire (2007) and Rafeeq (2008), among others.

Chapter 6: The research: Steps and direction of the content analysis

6.1 Research questions

- 1) Did *The Fiji Times* play any role, leading to political instability, culminating in George Speight's putsch and the seizure of Fiji's Parliament in May 2000?
- 2) Did any media theories discussed in the literature review characterise the stance of FT?
- 3) Were there any other contributory underlying reasons for the fall of democracy and one year reign of Chaudhry government in Fiji?

6.2 Sampling strategy

News coverage relating to and with any significance for the Chaudhry government in *The Fiji Times* from May 1999 to May 2000 inclusive would be analysed. The data from the newspaper would be shot in digital camera prints and some images are directly 'painted' into the thesis to illustrate the actual appearance and impact on readers.

6.3 Recording unit to depict direction and orientation

These would be the number of stories relating to the subject of the Chaudhry government or with any influence on it. As has been adopted by other researchers and academics in the literature review earlier, this thesis also analyses its data in three separate categories, which are *favourable* (positive), *unfavourable* (negative) and *neutral* (without taking sides).

Favourable

This refers to items covered in the news as reflecting positively or favourably. The items in this category project warmth and good picture of the government and its officials. Even reference may be made to issues or subjects that reflect positively.

Unfavourable

These are coverage of news items, cartoons, letters or opinion features that shed a negative or undesirable picture of the government, its politicians and the whole administrative set up. These items may also refer to anything that reflects badly on the government, promote ill-will or cause racial or other frictions.

Neutral

The items that fall in this category are educational or informative in nature. They may include analytical presentation or academic explanations. They are meant to shed light on the issues or the subject under discussion and reflect on the content without passion or partisanship.

6.4 Categories for analysis

These are the categories under which various subjects are covered. The task of selecting the subject or issue was a difficult one as there were so many general ones. However efforts have been made to categorise some scattered issue under one broad umbrella.

These were condensed to nineteen categories that were selected and subjected to content analysis. Four issues or subjects out of nineteen selected accounted for some 60 per cent of total sample because of their intense importance and impact on the government.

These are:

- 1) Peoples coalition victory, governance and politics (115)
- 2) Media: Bias, complaints, imbalance and ethics (107)
- 3) Racial agitation, protests and threats (123)
- 4) Land (123)

On the other spectrum, four out of nineteen topics or subjects accounted for only 4 per cent of the total sample, but these subjects were picked because of their importance and impact on the subsequent or consequential events that unfolded after 19 May , 2000.

Those included in this category are:

- 1) Socialism and sharing wealth ((4)
- 2) Punja and Companies (5)
- 3) Constitutional amendments (11)
- 4) Daily Post and Radio Ban (11)

6.5 Interpretation and analysis

This is the final process that will involve some 800 stories to be subjected to the final stage of the “codified common sense” through a close reading of each story and

categorising them in the recording units (favourable, unfavourable and neutral) to depict the direction and orientation.

The analysis that follows attempts to take the readers back to May 1999 to May 2000 with illustrations through the newspaper extracts with a view to arriving at the answers raised in the research questions. This section also involves interpretation of news items and articles, with direct reference to the published items which would be “pasted” in the thesis to show their appearance and impact.

Table 3 that follows details the headings of issues covered and corresponding chapter numbers. It gives a bird’s eye view of the results. This would be subjected to analysis and interpretation one by one.

ISSUES COVERED and Chapters	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
1 Election victory & politics [Ch. 7]	115	29	25.2	45	39.1	41	35.7
2 Media issues [Ch. 8]	107	6	5.6	69	64.5	32	29.9
3 Racial agitation, protests [Ch. 9]	123	15	12.2	79	64.2	29	23.6
4. Land [Ch. 10]	123	9	7.3	88	71.5	26	21.2
5 Rajen Chaudhry [Ch. 11]	18	0	0	11	61.1	7	38.9
6 Tea Lady affair [Ch. 12]	21	0	0	21	100	0	0
7 Baba & Chaudhry tension [Ch. 13]	19	1	5.2	17	89.5	1	5.3
8 Clark-Hunter work permit [Ch. 14]	26	2	7.7	7	26.9	17	65.4
9 Constitutional amendments [Ch. 15]	11	0	0	7	63.6	4	36.4
10 Fiji Hardwood & Speight [Ch 16]	23	1	4.3	7	30.4	15	65.3
11 Industrial Issues [Ch. 17]	35	1	2.9	26	74.3	8	22.8
12 Ganesh & Chaudhry House [Ch. 18]	28	0	0	20	71.4	8	28.6
13 Housing Authority [Ch. 19]	18	8	44.4	10	55.6	0	0
14 Margaret Wise [Ch. 20]	39	0	0	39	100	0	0
15 Daily Post & Radio Fiji Ban [Ch. 21]	11	0	0	4	36.4	7	63.6
16 Punja & Companies [Ch. 22]	5	1	20	1	20	3	60
17 Socialism & Sharing Wealth [Ch. 23]	4	1	25	2	50	1	25
18 Political Personalities [Ch. 24]	25	2	8	11	44	12	48
19 Zimbabwe Land Problems [Ch. 25]	21	0	0	21	100	0	0
	772	76	9.8	485	62.8	211	27.4

Table 3: *The Fiji Times* news items by category: Summary of the analysis, May 1999 to May 2000.

Almost two thirds (62.8 per cent) of the analysis reported negatively against the government while less than 10 per cent showed any warmth towards the government. Only just over a quarter (27.4 per cent) of the items were of neutral in nature. Of the 19 sections covered, thirteen (68.4 per cent) reported 50 per cent or more negative items while three of these were above 90 per cent. The trend of reporting points in one direction: For the largest selling paper in the country, such a large percentage of negative items would end up affecting people's perception of the government.

Despite this negative reporting, a poll conducted by FT revealed that despite so much negative reporting, Chaudhry government, seven months after its election victory reported very advanced poll results, higher than ever gained by Rabuka government before him. This is explained and illustrated in Chapter 7.3, figures 9 and 10. Therefore it would appear that those plotting to overthrow the government through less than the legal means had to act fast before the government became too popular with the common people. The chapters that follow trace the path of demise of a democratically elected government through the pages of a supposedly free, neutral, responsible and balanced mainstream newspaper of the Republic of Fiji Islands: *The Fiji Times*.

PART II- DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 7: People's Coalition victory, governance and politics

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Election victory & politics	115	29	25.2	45	39.1	41	35.7

Table 4: People's Coalition victory, governance and politics, May 1999 to May 2000.

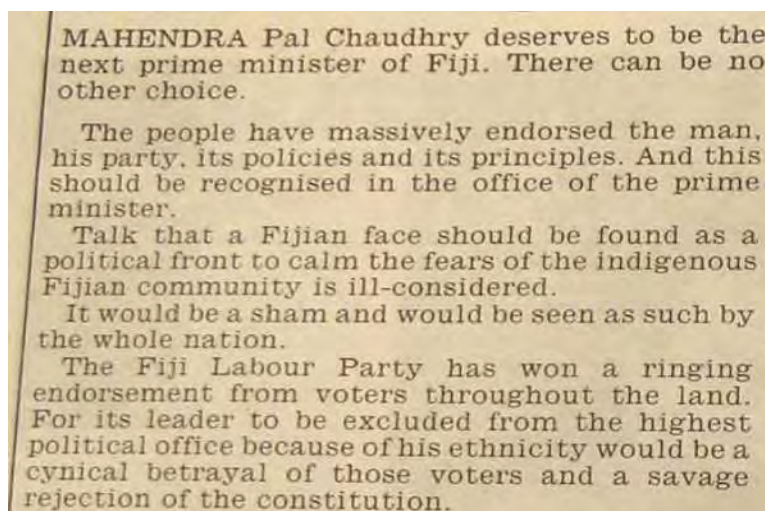
On the evening of 18 May 1999, Mahendra Chaudhry's Fiji Labour Party (FLP) achieved a landslide victory with 37 seats, comprising 52 per cent of seats, enough to rule on its own in a 71-seat Fiji Parliament. He was endorsed as the Prime Minister which was based on the agreement with its coalition partners, the Fijian Association Party (FAP) and the Party of National Unity (PANU), that the party with the largest number of seats would appoint the prime minister. The FAP received 11 seats while the PANU got 4 seats. The other coalition partner, Poseci Bune's Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA) received 3 seats. Hence the total number of seats for the People's Coalition government added up to 55 seats which made up an absolute majority of 77.5 per cent of the parliamentary seats. Rabuka's SVT Party got only 7 seats while their coalition partner, the National Federation Party (NFP) did not win any seat. The other seats were distributed as follows: the United General Party - 2, the Nationalist Vanua Tako Lavo Party - 2 and the independents made up 5 of the remaining seats to make a total of 71.

Dr Tupeni Baba and the FAP leader Adi Kuini Vuikaba Speed were endorsed as the Prime Minister's twin deputies. This was done despite objections from Apisai Tora, the general secretary of the PANU, who lost his own seat to a coalition partner candidate from the FLP, and who was later to cause a great deal of racial muckraking.

AS Table 4 shows above and can be compared with Table 3 as well, in absolute terms, the highest number of positive stories (29) and some of the highest percentages were obtained immediately after the election in May 1999. It is also important to note that despite so many stories covered, relatively, some of the lowest percentages of unfavourable stories were reflected in this category. This reflects on the initial good terms of the media with the new government.

The editorial comments of *The Fiji Times* (hereafter referred to as FT, which is inclusive of *The*) on 19 May 1999 were: "Why Chaudhry must lead." And they gave

very good and positive reasons why he should and must rule, in the Editorial below in Figure (hereafter referred to as “Fig”) 1 or Fig 1:



MAHENDRA Pal Chaudhry deserves to be the next prime minister of Fiji. There can be no other choice.

The people have massively endorsed the man, his party, its policies and its principles. And this should be recognised in the office of the prime minister.

Talk that a Fijian face should be found as a political front to calm the fears of the indigenous Fijian community is ill-considered.

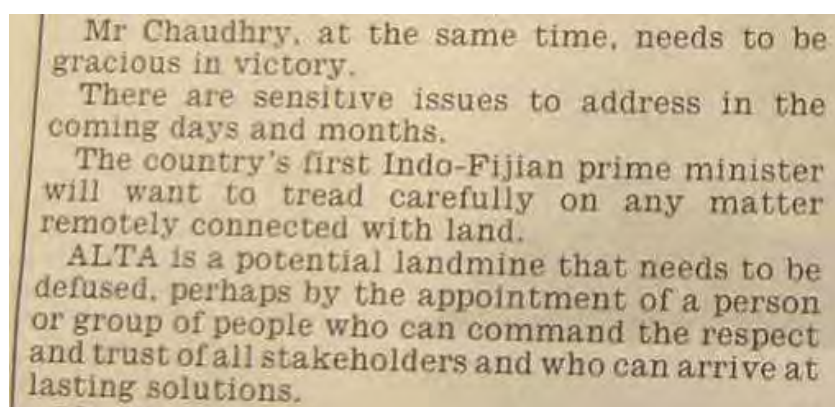
It would be a sham and would be seen as such by the whole nation.

The Fiji Labour Party has won a ringing endorsement from voters throughout the land. For its leader to be excluded from the highest political office because of his ethnicity would be a cynical betrayal of those voters and a savage rejection of the constitution.

Figure 1: Why Chaudhry should lead, Editorial, (1999, May 19), p. 6. [929]

[Note: In this reference of figures, the number in straight bracket [] refers to the digital film shots number of the respective stories/pages that are held by the Library and would be made available upon request. Except for ‘Editorials’ and “Letters to Editor” columns, bylines are also shown for all other articles, with “NBL” where no byline was used.]

The paper, in Fig 2, however cautioned Chaudhry to tread carefully on the sensitive land issue:



Mr Chaudhry, at the same time, needs to be gracious in victory.

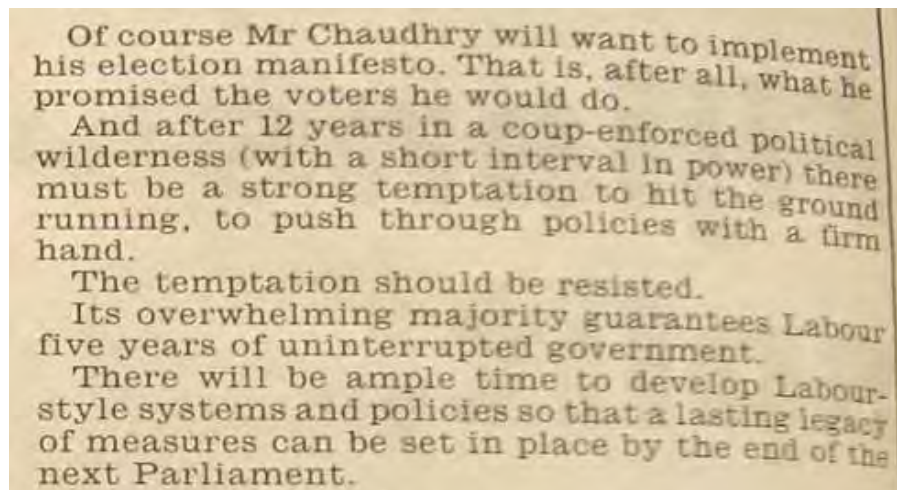
There are sensitive issues to address in the coming days and months.

The country's first Indo-Fijian prime minister will want to tread carefully on any matter remotely connected with land.

ALTA is a potential landmine that needs to be defused, perhaps by the appointment of a person or group of people who can command the respect and trust of all stakeholders and who can arrive at lasting solutions.

Figure 2: Why Chaudhry should lead, Editorial, (1999, May 19), p. 6. [929]

It also cautioned him in Fig 3 to proceed gradually with any changes without haste so that he was able to win support and see uninterrupted rule for the next five years:



Of course Mr Chaudhry will want to implement his election manifesto. That is, after all, what he promised the voters he would do.

And after 12 years in a coup-enforced political wilderness (with a short interval in power) there must be a strong temptation to hit the ground running, to push through policies with a firm hand.

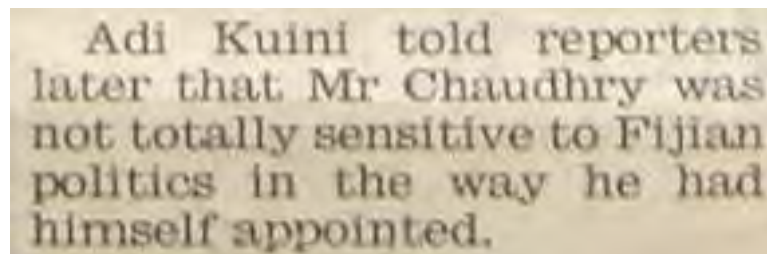
The temptation should be resisted.

Its overwhelming majority guarantees Labour five years of uninterrupted government.

There will be ample time to develop Labour-style systems and policies so that a lasting legacy of measures can be set in place by the end of the next Parliament.

Figure 3: Why Chaudhry should lead, Editorial, (1999, May 19), p. 6. [929]

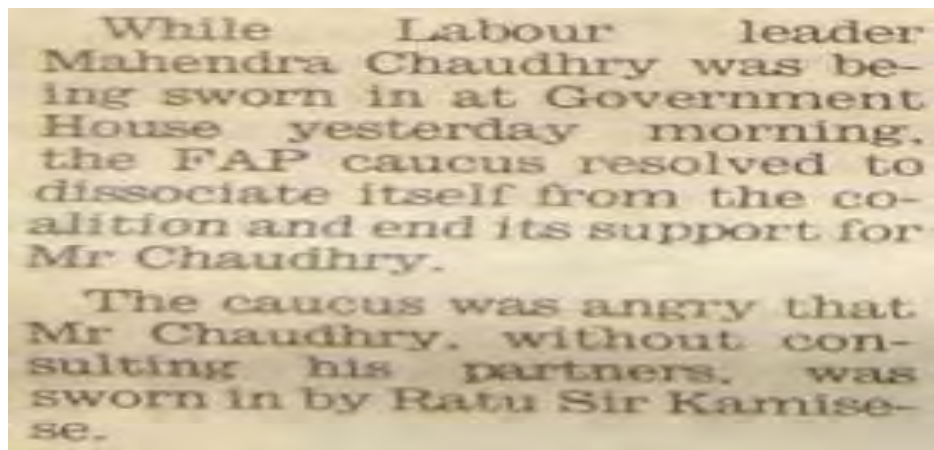
There was initial bickering on the second day of Mahendra Pal Chaudhry (hereafter referred to as MPC) being sworn in as the prime minister. His senior coalition partner, the FAP wished its leader Adi Kuini Speed to be appointed prime minister because there were threats from the Fijian community of unrest. Adi Kuini was disappointed with the unilateral way MPC went ahead with his swearing in and the decision about the prime ministership without any consultation. She sounded an early warning to MPC about his style of leadership on the second day of his government in Fig 4:



Adi Kuini told reporters later that Mr Chaudhry was not totally sensitive to Fijian politics in the way he had himself appointed.

Figure 4: Mara steps in to help coalition, (1999, May 20), p. 1. [935][Staff Reporters]

A leadership crisis within the new coalition, as shown in Fig 5, was only averted by the timely intervention of the President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara:

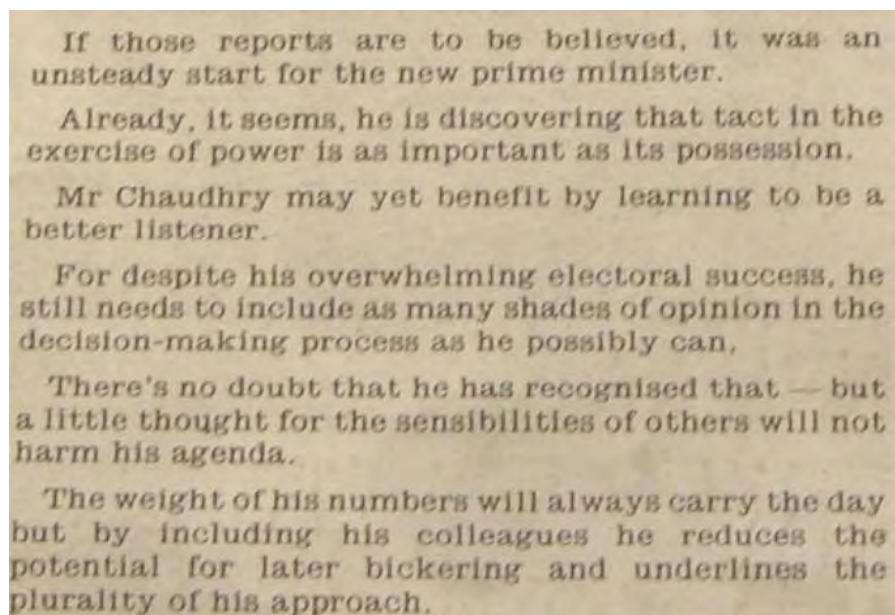


While Labour leader Mahendra Chaudhry was being sworn in at Government House yesterday morning, the FAP caucus resolved to dissociate itself from the coalition and end its support for Mr Chaudhry.

The caucus was angry that Mr Chaudhry, without consulting his partners, was sworn in by Ratu Sir Kamisese.

Figure 5: Mara steps in to help coalition, (1999, May 20), p. 1. [935][Staff Reporters]

It is to be noted that in the early days of the new government, FT was helpful with good advice if MPC was prepared to take them on board. Following the early signs of discord, it went ahead to offer further advice to him through a timely editorial in Fig 6:



If those reports are to be believed, it was an unsteady start for the new prime minister.

Already, it seems, he is discovering that tact in the exercise of power is as important as its possession.

Mr Chaudhry may yet benefit by learning to be a better listener.

For despite his overwhelming electoral success, he still needs to include as many shades of opinion in the decision-making process as he possibly can.

There's no doubt that he has recognised that — but a little thought for the sensibilities of others will not harm his agenda.

The weight of his numbers will always carry the day but by including his colleagues he reduces the potential for later bickering and underlines the plurality of his approach.

Figure 6: A time for calm, Editorial, (1999, May 19), p. 6. [939]

While good comments were given in the Editorial opinion, the paper allowed racially tainted, abusive, insensitive and threatening letters to appear in their Letters to Editor (hereafter referred to as LTE) column. One such example is given below in Fig 7:

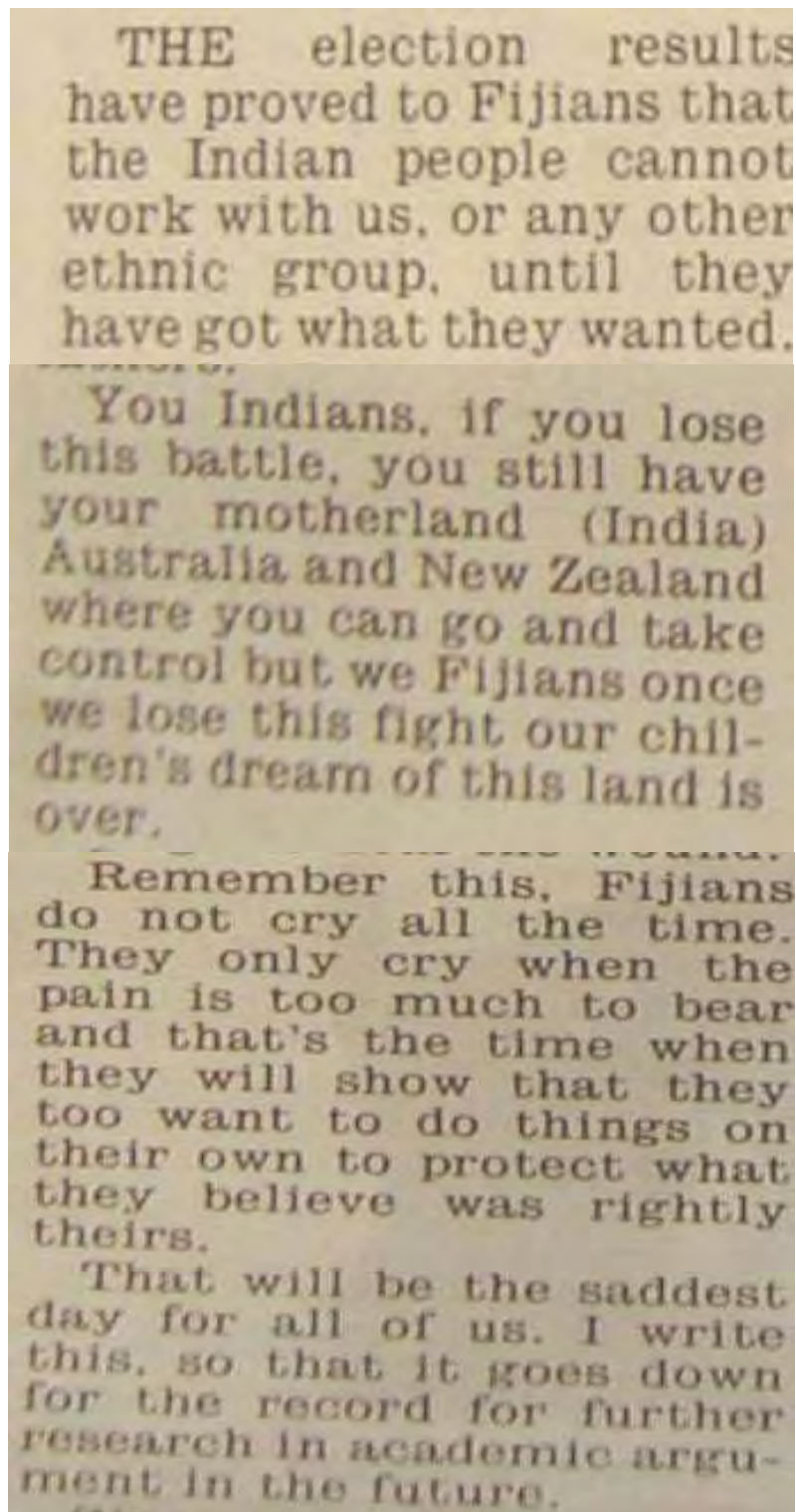


Figure 7: Orisis, Ufa, Election results, LTE, (1999, May 26), p. 6 [955]

Some notable and controversial issues

7.1 Call for Christianity

As if they already did not have problems, the government's inexperience and a lack of tact were evident. Adi Kuini speaks about converting MPC to Christianity because his

(Chaudhry's) wife is a Christian and Indians being Christians would help in race relations and also help Chaudhry in Cabinet with eleven Fijian Christian Ministers. These unwarranted comments drew strong reactions from the Hindus who questioned if there was anything inferior with Hinduism. This also led one Member of Parliament from Naitasiri, Bulanauca to say derogatory things about Hinduism. For a known nationalist Parliamentarian, using such seditious and divisive uttering, bordering on sacrilege may be termed as attention-seeking tactic of a politician. However, use of such a sensitive issue as a front-page story, by an influential media in a racially-divided country borders on irresponsibility. The paper, without seeking censorship, could have applied some restraint. Bulanauca was effectively permitted to refer Hindu gods as "Satan" on the front page of FT, as seen in Fig 8:

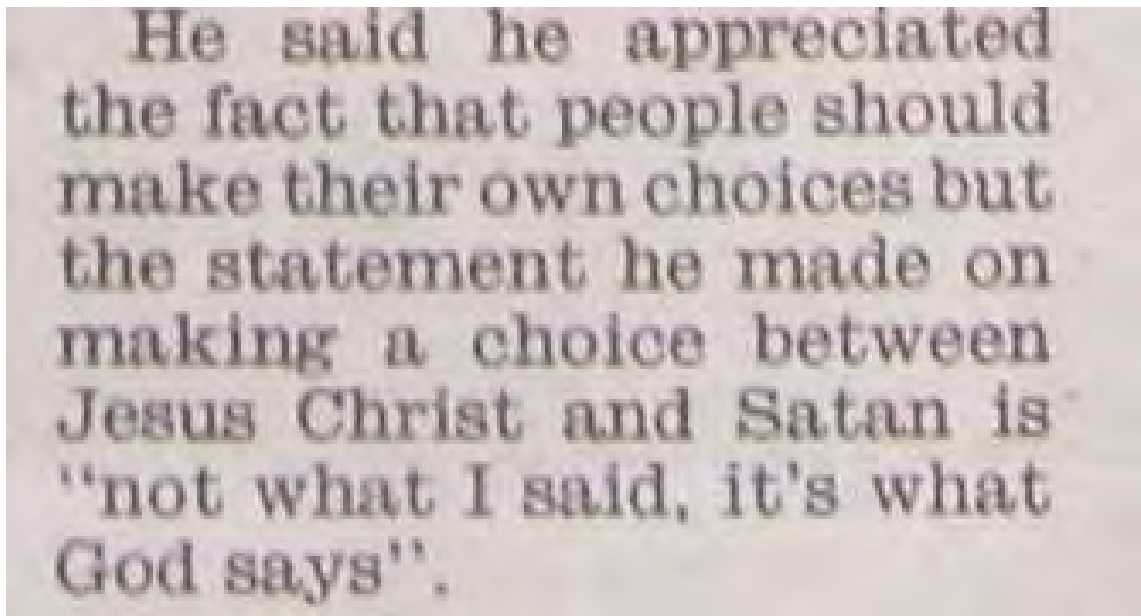


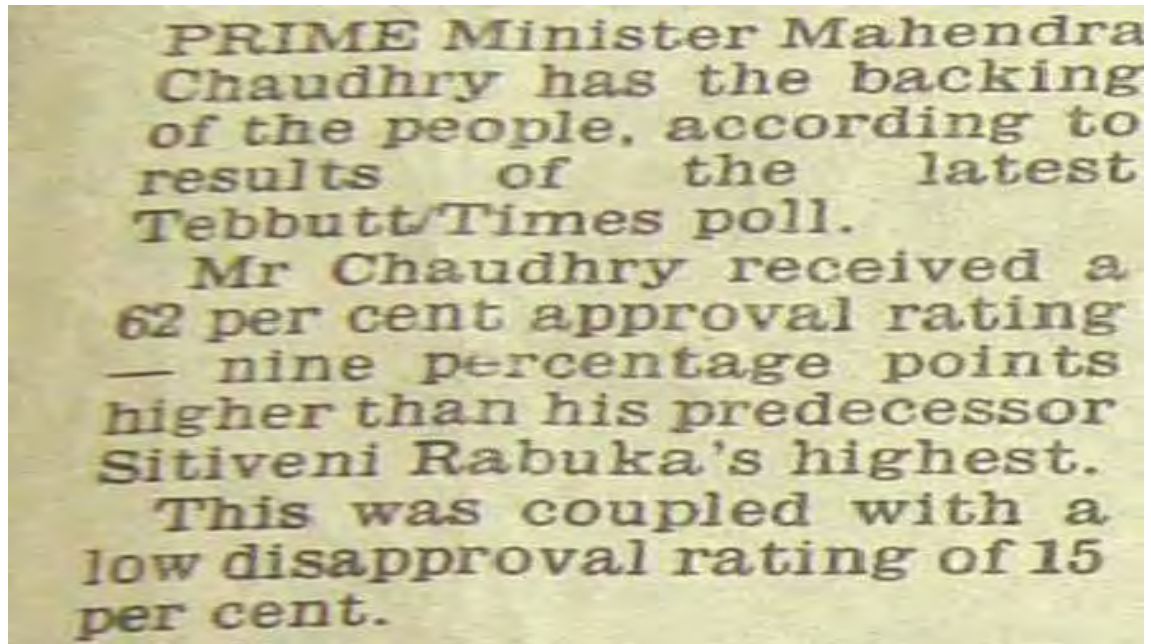
Figure 8: Adi Kuini wants all-Christian Fiji, (1999, June 18), p. 1. [998][Matelita Ragogo]

7.2 File Shredding

It was reported by FT that the government had shredded confidential and personal files held by the Fiji Intelligence Services. The indecisive Minister for Home Affairs, Joji Uluinakauvadra, could not come up with good clear explanations. Neither could anybody else in the government. FT had a field day in ridiculing the government.

This created unnecessary bad publicity for the government. It appears FT played on the weakness and apparent incompetence in the Information Ministry.

7.3 Positive news – for a change



PRIME Minister Mahendra Chaudhry has the backing of the people, according to results of the latest Tebbutt/Times poll.

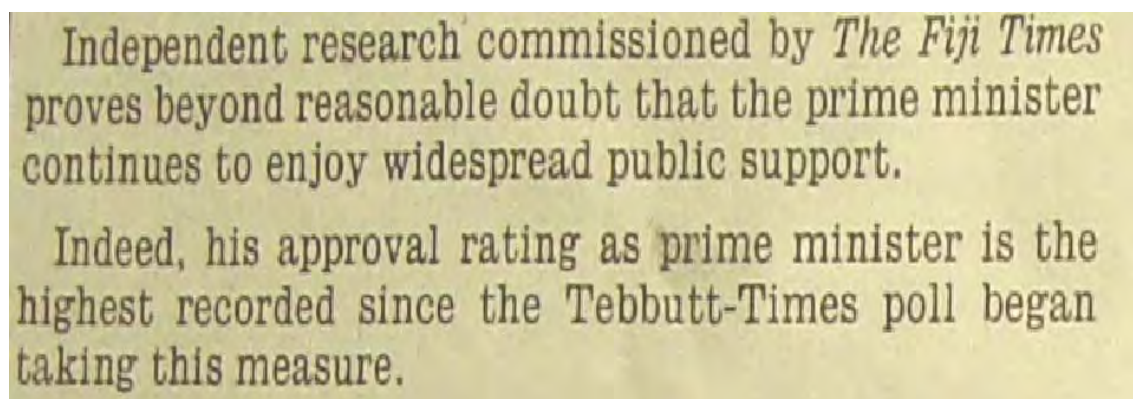
Mr Chaudhry received a 62 per cent approval rating — nine percentage points higher than his predecessor Sitiveni Rabuka's highest.

This was coupled with a low disapproval rating of 15 per cent.

Figure 9: PM tops poll, (1999, December, 14), p. 1. [516][Matelita Ragogo]

In this instance perhaps FT was forced to praise MPC because he was declared as the ever most popular prime minister, only in his seventh month of rule, through a Tebbutt-Times poll set up by FT (See Fig 9 above). The Tebbutt Times Poll has been at the forefront of public opinion since it started in 1992. The Tebbutt Times Poll is funded by *The Fiji Times* and independently collected and analysed by Tebbutt Research.

The result showed an overwhelming support for him and this was also echoed by the accompanying editorial on the same subject in Fig 10:



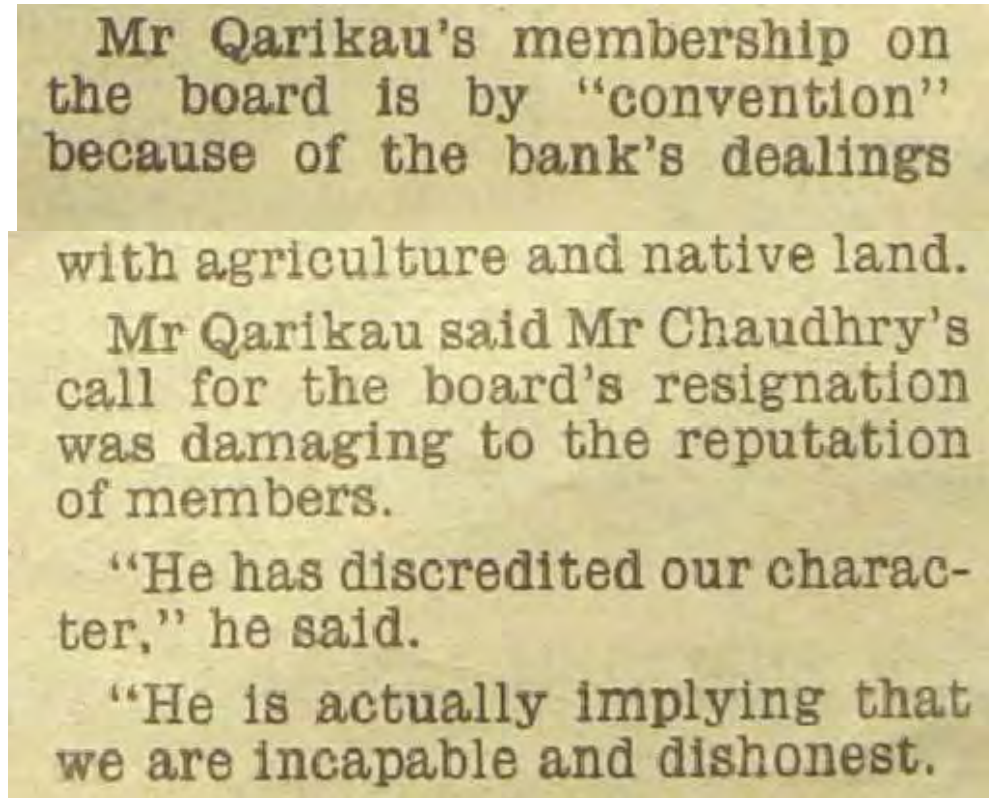
Independent research commissioned by *The Fiji Times* proves beyond reasonable doubt that the prime minister continues to enjoy widespread public support.

Indeed, his approval rating as prime minister is the highest recorded since the Tebbutt-Times poll began taking this measure.

Figure 10 : Thumbs up for Chaudhry, Editorial, (1999, December 14), p. 6. [518]

7.4 Inexpedient decision on the removal of Maika Qarikau

MPC's decision to axe Maika Qarikau as a board member of the Fiji Development Board was a serious mistake. It was an extremely poor decision which was going to haunt the government later. See Fig 11 below:

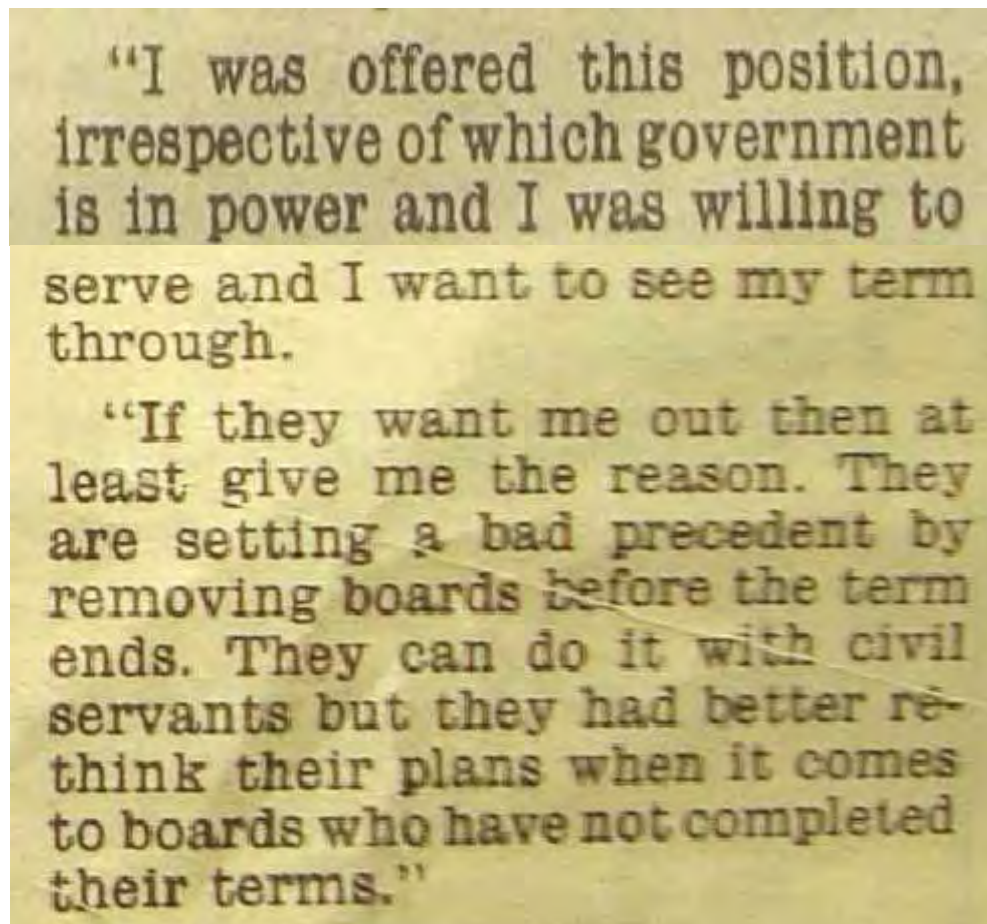


Mr Qarikau's membership on the board is by "convention" because of the bank's dealings with agriculture and native land.

Mr Qarikau said Mr Chaudhry's call for the board's resignation was damaging to the reputation of members.

"He has discredited our character," he said.

"He is actually implying that we are incapable and dishonest."



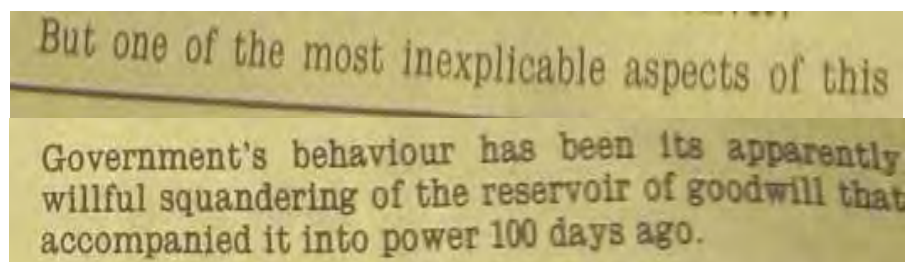
"I was offered this position, irrespective of which government is in power and I was willing to serve and I want to see my term through.

"If they want me out then at least give me the reason. They are setting a bad precedent by removing boards before the term ends. They can do it with civil servants but they had better re-think their plans when it comes to boards who have not completed their terms."

Figure 11; Bank director refuses to quit, (2000, February 29), p. 1 [627] [Margaret Wise]

This would turn out to be a costly, hasty and an inexpedient action, because the convention had dictated that the General Manager of the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) sits on the board of the Fiji Development Bank (FDB). There was no hasty reason to remove him. The early warnings were not heeded. This decision would come back to bite the Prime Minister (See later discussions on "Land" issue in Chapter 10).

The government had been forewarned of such haste and loss of goodwill by the editorial of FT (Fig 12) when it did a review of its performance of the first 100 days, on 27 August, 1999:



But one of the most inexplicable aspects of this

Government's behaviour has been its apparently willful squandering of the reservoir of goodwill that accompanied it into power 100 days ago.

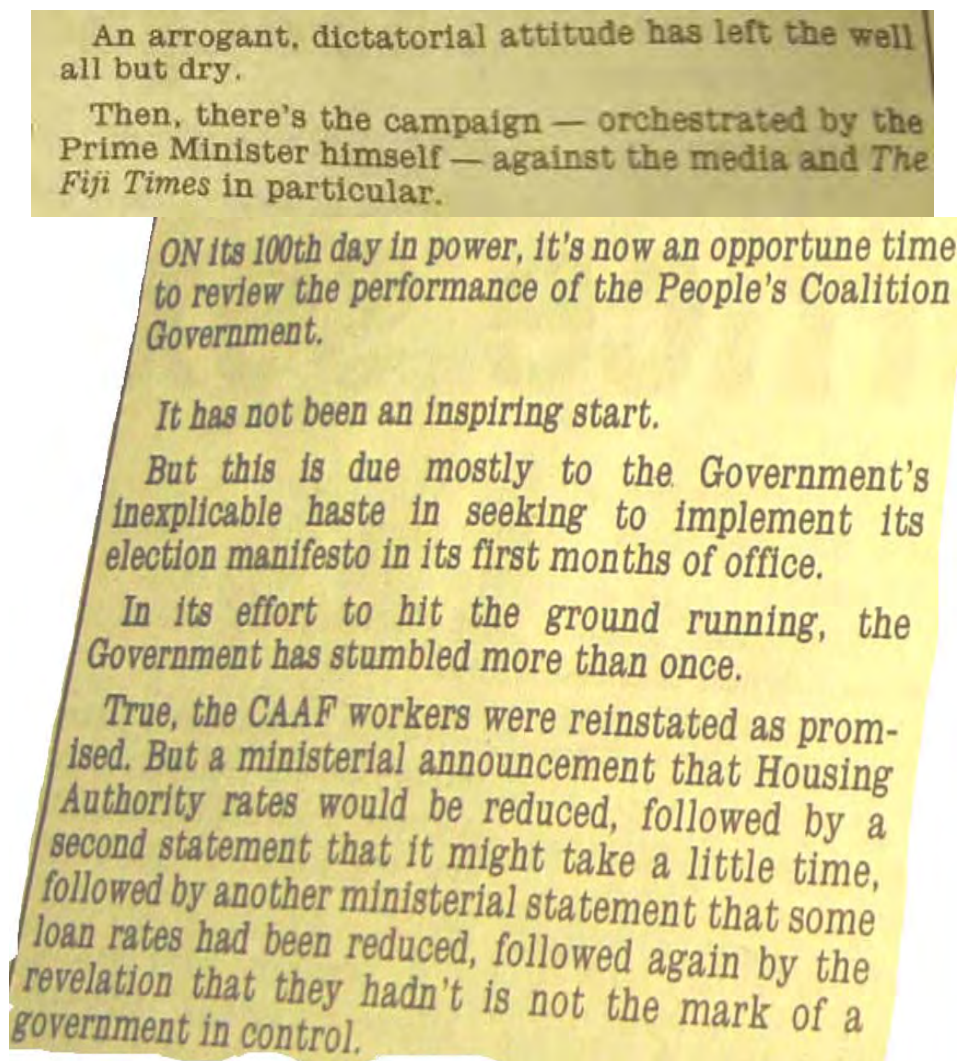


Figure 12: 100 days in power, Editorial, (1999, August 27), p. 6 [351]

It is evident from the above and other editorials in the early stages of MPC government that at least the editorial write ups were more balanced; the problem, as we will see in the analysis of other areas, was with the selection and stance of the news stories. This is well illustrated below.

7.5 The early Butadroka protest march

Initiated and fanned by a lost candidate Apisai Tora, and supported by the known nationalist, Sakiasi Butadroka, the plans of protest against Chaudhry's "Indian" government was hatched within weeks of MPC being formally sworn in as the first Indo-Fijian prime minister. The Taukei Movement threatened to go ahead with the march even if they did not get the police permit allowing it to go ahead. FT published a hard-hitting opinion through its editorial of 27 May, 1999, (Fig 13) appropriately titled: "Stop the march":

IN any democracy there has to be tolerance of dissent and avenues through which it can be expressed.

Just as the trade union movement had its day of protest, the Taukei marchers should be allowed their day on the streets.

That is if it is done legally.

For the danger is that this is an attempt by some bad losers who, having been massively rejected by the voters, now seek to reinstate themselves through other than democratic means.

The real instigators of the protest won't be seen on the streets.

This loud minority seeks to use the marchers (who no doubt believe in their cause) to create a tidal wave that will sweep them into political office.

Their only cause is their own greed and ambition.

These are the people who stand in the darkness behind the puppet theatre, pulling the strings that make their dummy actors perform on the stage the audience sees.

They genuinely believe that they are born to rule and that the country owes it to them to put them in high positions with commensurate pay and privileges.

Figure 13: Stop the march, Editorial, (1999, May 27), p. 6 [958]

The above opinion, in support and defence of democracy and freedom to protest legally, appears very commendable and appropriate in the circumstances. However, FT's news coverage of the event next day by its key political reporter Margaret Wise showed a complete different stance by the paper, as seen in Fig 14:

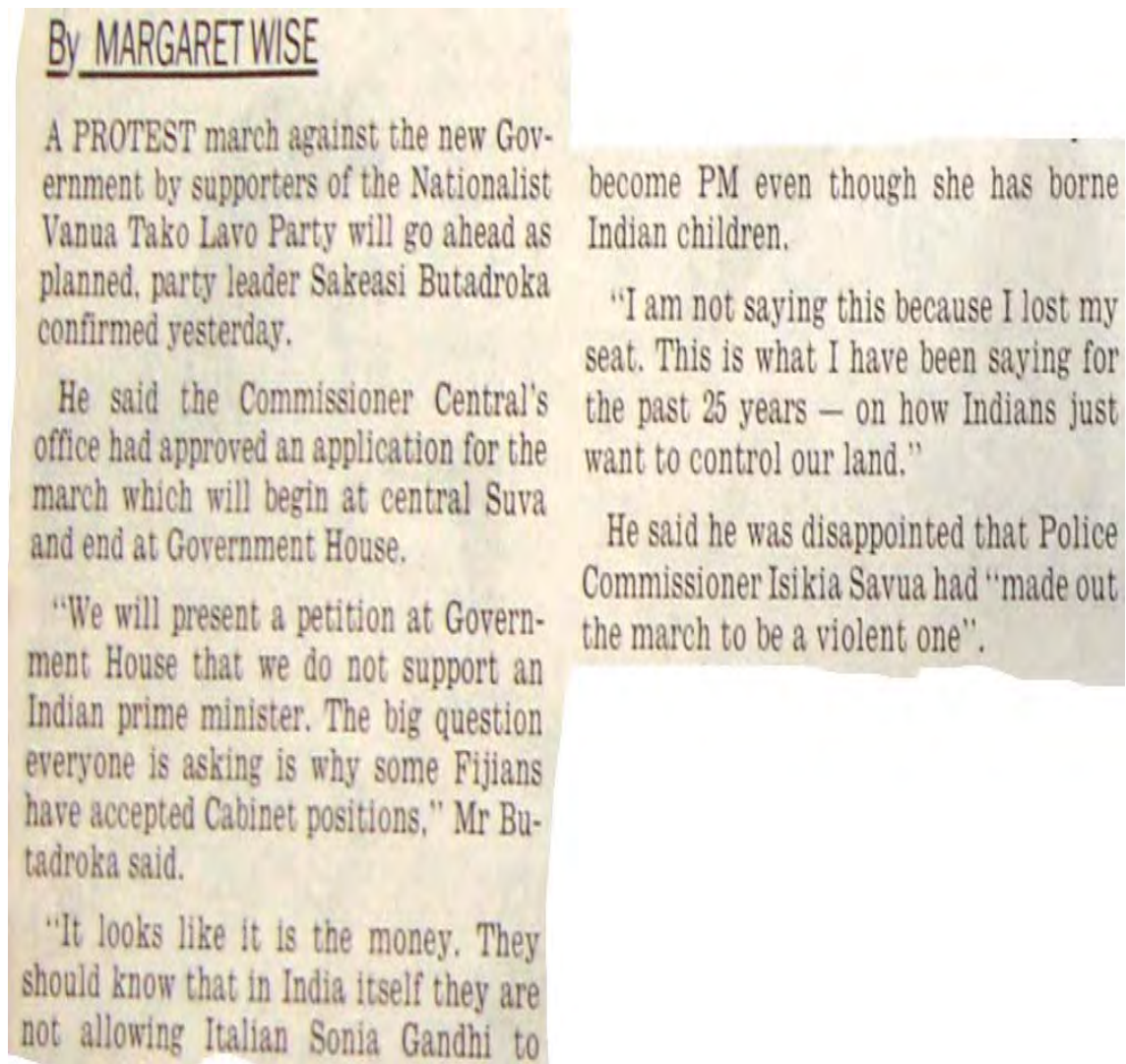


Figure 14: March to go ahead, (1999, May 28), p. 3 [959] [Margaret Wise]

Comparing the tone and stance of the above story with FT's earlier editorial reveals the hypocrisy of the newspaper. While FT would warn about bad losers trying to claw back to power through other than democratic means, the news report seem to grant those losers full liberty, not only to utter seditious, and racial slurs on the Indo-Fijian community, but also allows sensation and emotions to override the fact and truth. The comparison between Sonia Gandhi and Mahendra Chaudhry is wrong, misplaced and mischievous: the former is Italian-born and her association with India is only through marriage, while MPC is a third-generation Indo-Fijian through birth. It is unfortunate that the vacuum of FT's inability to properly inform and enlighten the people is filled by the following letter writer in Fig 15:

A PROMINENT politician objects to having a Fiji Indian prime minister.

He states his objection is the same objection that some Indians have to a prime minister who was born in Italy.

Actually the objection is totally different.

Sonia Gandhi was born in Italy, not India.

The vast majority of Fiji Indians in Fiji were born in Fiji.

For the majority of the Fiji Indians, Fiji is the only country they have ever known.

So far as I am aware it is impossible to choose one's ancestors or the country of one's birth.

Figure 15: Eggers, Frank, Indian PM, LTE, (1999, May 29), p. 6 [963]

As a Third World media, if FT was assessed using Robie's Four World's News Values model, it would be a resounding misfit. Robie (2001) postulated that among "Third World" news values is one relating to national integration which focuses on unity among the people (p.12). In this instance and others which are presented later in the analysis, racially divisive and seditious issues were given high prominence by news coverage in FT. This would also not gel easily with the Development Journalism model which is supposed to place greater emphasis on multiracialism and unity rather than freedom of expression. According to Loo (1994), in promoting fairness, justice and understanding of cross-cultural relations, the journalist would indulge in self-censorship (p. 4). There has been little evidence of FT conforming to such understanding and the principles of DJ.

7.6 Positive news goes begging while trivial matters take priority

It may be safely assumed that the government was not too pleased with the FDB which was supposed to assist grassroots people but had focussed too much attention on commercial loans with big businesses. It was for that reason that on 26 January 2000 the Assistant Minister for Fijian Affairs, Isireli Vuibau, announced that the government planned to set up a bank to assist the indigenous people, and even offer them interest free loans, due to the failure of the FDB to deliver (Fig 16).

This initiative of the government was ignored by the media in general and FT in particular, which did not pick up the issue and give it more exposure via editorial comments on this important and positive “developmental” subject. It would appear FT reporters and the newsroom decision-makers were busy with race-based and divisive news items and neglected to push the government further on a commendable initiative that the past Fijian-dominated and Fijian-led governments had ignored for their grassroots indigenous people.

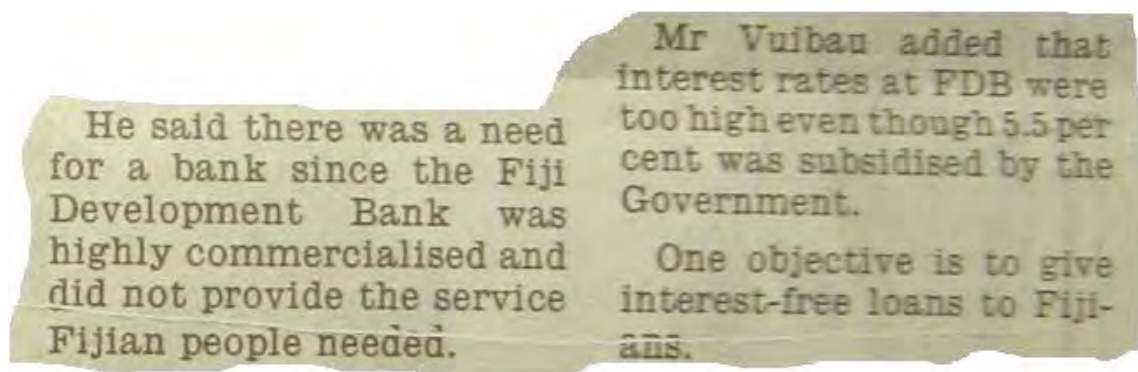


Figure 16: Bank to be set up for Fijians, (2000, January 26), p. 3 [586] [NBL]

Substantial media time has gone in reporting on issues that dwell on internal affairs of day to day running of the government and would not normally warrant media attention. Among others, this involved an issue about the carpet for the Assistant Information Minister’s office and furniture for Social Welfare Minister’s Office. In most cases, issues were resolved after clarification from government through letters to editor. What this all revealed is that FT’s obsession with reporting on generally negative trivial matters on the government distracted it from concentrating on the bigger picture of nation-building and development; it failed to inform the public on things they should know.

If the government was blamed for lacking a well-oiled media strategy on how to handle the media, it appears FT also lacked a strategy on how to handle the government, especially a new one in a developing country.

7.7 Faults of the People's Coalition Government and Chaudhry's perceived arrogance

In the early days of MPC government, FT and the government were on good terms. The newspaper, in its earlier congratulatory editorial cautioned Chaudhry on two things: not to touch land and to tread carefully on changes to policies and procedures. It also cautioned him, to listen to the rumblings on the ground in Fig 17:

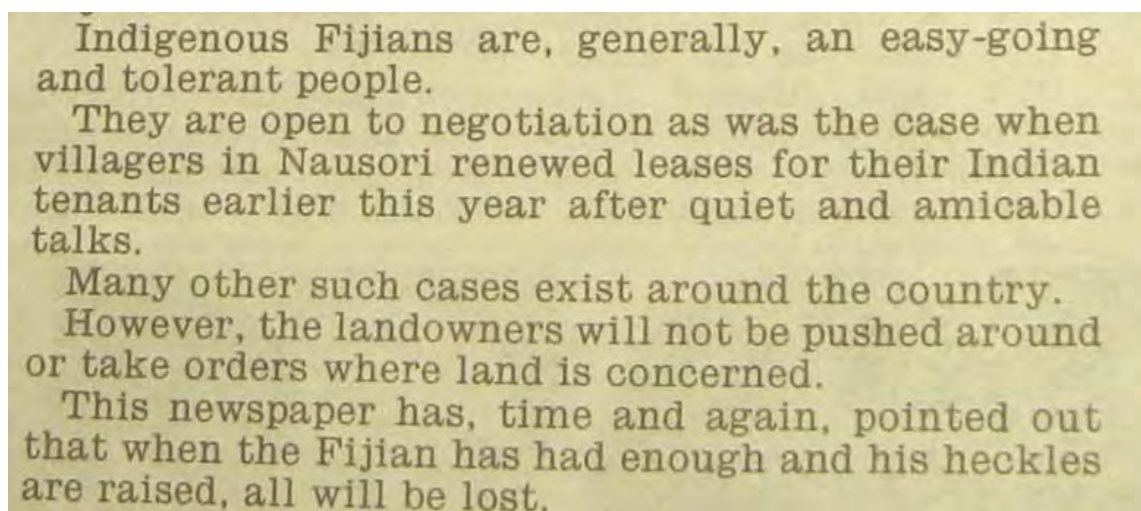


Figure 17 : Listen, for a change: Editorial, (2000, April 1), p. 6. [688]

Faults of MPC are not only seen by the indigenous Fijians, but also by his close allies. A one-time close personal friend of MPC and the Secretary - General of the Fiji Labour Party, Navin Maharaj expressed his views in a letter to the editor (Fig 18). He said that while people had given an overwhelming support to the FLP and MPC to resolve the issues facing people, especially the land issue, this should be done in an amicable manner without making many enemies and causing “bad blood.”

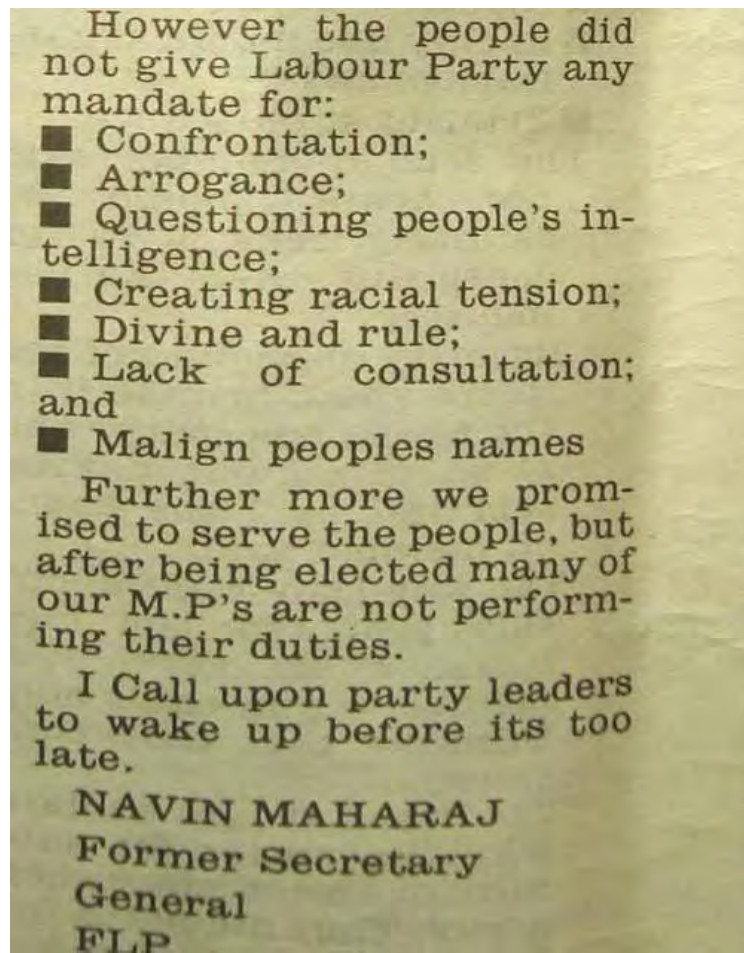


Figure 18 : Maharaj, Navin, Labour worries, LTE, (2000, April 1), p. 6. [689]

After comments and criticisms from politicians, it was a good change to hear from a soldier who had been a key player in the 2000 Speight coup: the former SAS soldier and the right hand man of Speight, Ilisoni Ligairi (Fig 19). He spoke while Chaudhry was in the 9th day of captivity at the Parliament and reiterated issues that were of concern and the perception that MPC as an “Indian” had failed to understand the indigenous feelings:

'Chaudhry's failure'

By MARGARET WISE

Uncompromising rule led to takeover, Ligairi says

REBEL leader Ilisoni Ligairi said deposed prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry missed "a great" opportunity to show Fijians that an Indian could be trusted to lead the country.

He said the former unionist's uncompromising style of leadership led to the takeover bid and ultimately, the overthrow of the Labour dominated government.

"A majority of Fijians were not happy with the changes made to the 1990 Constitution — where guaranteed majority parliamentary representation by Fijians was removed and the guarantee that a Fijian will always lead," Ligairi said.

"But we waited and the last 12 months has proved to us that you just can't trust them.

"We always knew this and it was naive for our Fijian leaders to think otherwise.

"But then again the 1997 Constitution could be a blessing in disguise in that it allowed for us to see what it's like to have an Indian as PM. In that short time Chaudhry was trampling on everything Fijian. Why he took that path, I don't know. But it has resulted in this and that is why we want to make sure they do not get another opportunity to make us fear for our future in our own country.

"This is why we want the Constitution changed."

Figure 19 : 'Chaudhry's failures': Uncompromising rule led to takeover, says Ligairi, (2000, May 28), p. 3. [1120] [Margaret Wise]

This sentiment was well summed up by Lal (2010) when he cited Jai Ram Reddy, who obviously had Chaudhry in mind, when he (Reddy) spoke about consensus:

Consensus was not for the belligerent and the self-righteous. Consensus making and consensus seeking would be quite foreign to their nature. Let us not allow them to hijack our agreed agenda for securing for our people a consensus that is broadly acceptable now, but leaving the room wide open for any further reform that they may seek and agree upon at a later stage. (p. 621)

Lal (2010) implied that perhaps the threat to Fiji's peaceful co-existence was Chaudhry who was "brought up in the confrontational culture of trade union politics" and hence lacked that "gradual, incremental approach, reaching out and cultivating the middle ground, an integral part of Reddy's political outlook"(p. 621).

Chapter 8: Media: Bias, complaints, imbalance and ethics

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Media issues	107	6	5.6	69	64.5	32	29.9

Table 5: Media: Bias, complaints, imbalance and ethics, May 1999 to May 2000.

This thesis is about the media and its effect on people, hence the results of this section hold the utmost importance to this discourse, as it sets the tone, trend and the theme. There were almost negligible positive or favourable messages or news items while almost two thirds of all the news and content in this category reported unfavourably, projecting negatively about MPC and the People's Coalition Government.

8.1 Starting on a positive note

As has been reported in the earlier analysis, the media and the government started on a positive note. Within weeks of coming to power, MPC gave assurances his government would not impose controls or laws and requested media be fair and balanced (Fig 20):

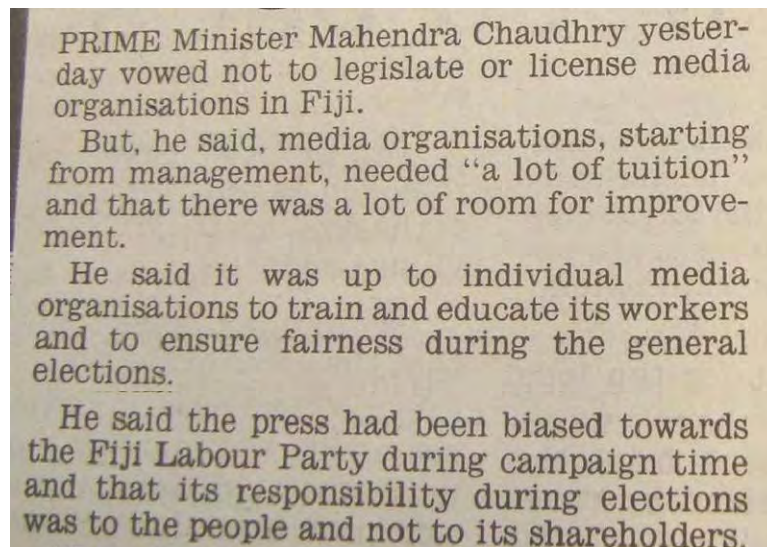


Figure 20: PM gives media freedom, (1999, May 22), p. 4 [948] [NBL]

It appears the media, especially FT was satisfied with this assurance and this was reflected in its editorials where it supported the appointment of MPC by the President as the Prime Minister. FT had urged the people to move out of the racial compartment and concentrate on an all inclusive national development (Fig 21):

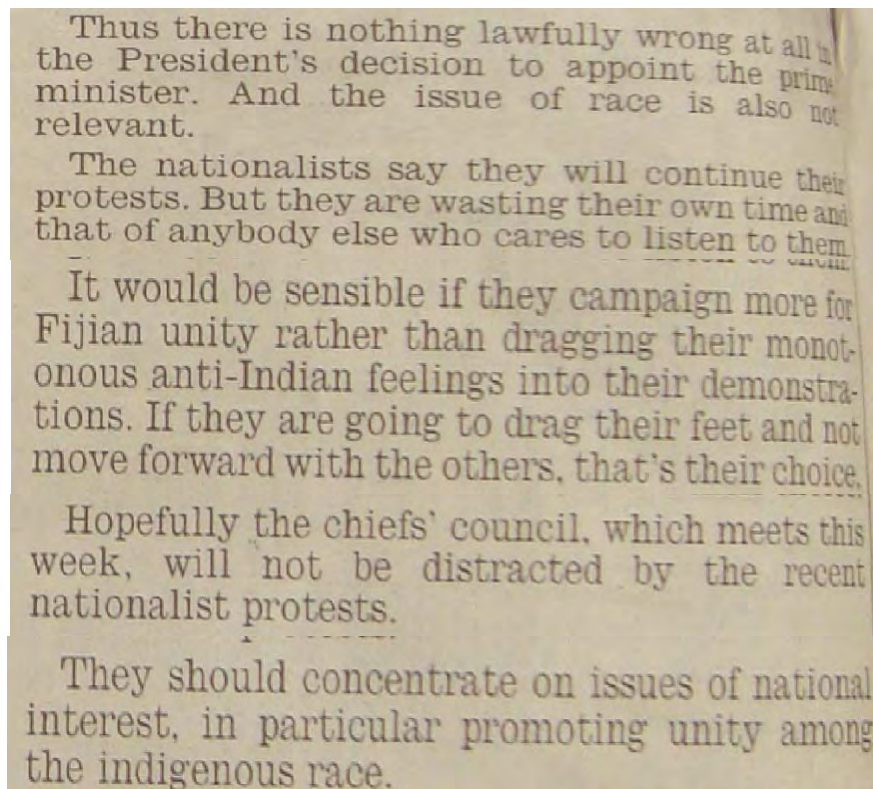


Figure 21 : Mis-directed protests, Editorial, (1999, June 1), p. 6 [971]

8.2 Inconsistency between the editorials and news content

While writing very commendable editorial comments, the paper did not seem to follow them through in ensuring what they say in editorials are reflected in the pages of the published news stories. On the same day as the editorial above (Fig 21), the paper ran a story without any byline, allowing any chief to use the paper to agitate on racial lines. While lecturing about the role of chiefs and Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) in not dwelling on racial lines, FT allowed one little chief, Filipe Tuisawau to vent his racism (Fig 22) against the new government:

He said the GCC should not support Mahendra Chaudhry as Prime Minister because he was not through Fijian votes. The leading Fiji Labour Party also received a small number of Fijian votes, he added.

“Chaudhry’s Government must not be allowed into the meeting,” Ro Filipe said.

“The political status and dignity of the Fijian people are now at a crucial point in our history as the indigenous people of Fiji.

Figure 22: Chief’s council not rubber stamp: Tuisawau, (1999, June 1), p. 3. [968][NBL]

Another issue related to the Auditor General’s report on Rajendra Chaudhry’s overpayment of leave allowance (Fig 23):

AN audit report has questioned leave compensation paid to the Prime Minister’s private secretary, Rajendra Chaudhry, while he was employed at the Labour Party office in Parliament. In that payment, Mr Chaudhry was also overpaid by \$194.08.

Figure 23: Extra pay for Chaudhry Junior, (1999, June 26), p. 3. [1032][NBL]

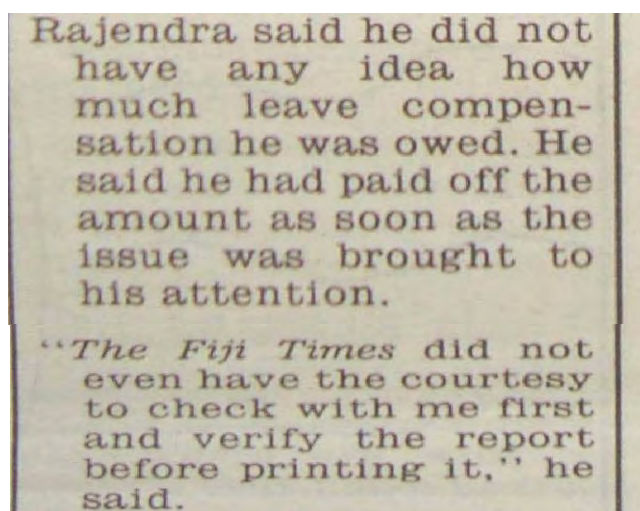


Figure 24: PM's son clears record, (1999, June 29) p. 5. [1036][NBL]

There were a few significant issues in this reporting. The audit report showed Rajendra Chaudhry was paid \$194 extra in leave pay which, as stated, was a procedural error. This news came in bold with a large photo of Chaudhry junior. However in abuse of office by the First Secretary, Isikeli Maitaitoga, of more than \$10,000, Militoni Lewiniqila running into millions of dollars in CDF scandal and former Lands Minister, Ratu Timoci Vesikula, no photos were shown and there were no bold writings and no editorials censured them. However for a relatively minor sum of \$194, a story without a byline and without seeking balance and comments from Rajendra Chaudhry was published (Fig 24). Another similar case was that of tinting of PM's official car which is deemed a normal security procedure internationally for people in positions of power. The amount involved was a petty-cash equivalent of only \$385, but this item attracted front page news treatment (Fig 25). One may perhaps question the news value of this item:



Figure 25: Chaudhry tints official car for \$385, (1999, 22 October), p. 1. [433][NBL]

This article on a negligible sum of \$385 for car tinting was accompanied by the cartoon below (Fig 26). Tinting of official cars of dignitaries in Fiji, especially the past Prime Ministers, has been a custom and practice. Chaudhry's case was nothing exceptional, except the media frenzy on such a trivial issue.



Figure 26 : Cartoon: He (PM) does not want people to see him: On Pm's car tint, costing \$385, (October 23), p. 6. [436]

In questionable media coverage, a racially slanted item, quoted former SVT parliamentarian, Adi Finau Tabakauoro, whose party had endorsed the 1997 Constitution. She made racial attacks on overseas experts who had come to attend a conference. In FT story, without a byline and balance from other parties, she launched one sided racially biased attacks on the Constitution (Fig 27):

"First it is a Constitution in whose making all the concessions came from indigenous Fijians. Included in the concessions was the relinquishing of Fijian rights and accepting a farcical recognition of Fijian interests in a compact which is not judicial and therefore of no real value," she said.

"Secondly, this new Constitution is destined to marginalise indigenous Fijians politically. A major step in that direction has already occurred and it has set in place a process which will escalate in pace towards their being of no political consequence.

Figure 27: Forum comes under fire, (1999, October 25), p. 8 [441] [NBL]

8.3 Feedback through 'Letters to Editor' (LTE)

There have been numerous reader feedbacks on the standard of reporting and journalism. The article above (Fig 27) was criticised by Reverend Akuila Yabaki, executive director of the Citizen's Constitutional Forum (CCF) via a LTE (Fig 28).

We believe that whilst *The Fiji Times* is free to be partisan in publishing the original article you were in breach of two sections of the Media Code.

First where it says "media organisations are required to be sensitive to and particularly careful about possible effects of discriminatory references

to vulnerable minorities in prejudicial and pejorative contexts".

Second — in not disclosing the context where the Honourable Senator made the attack — your paper was also in breach of the section which required media organisations "to disclose all known relevant facts ... and care not to publish material which is distorted by wrong or improper emphasis".

Whatever one may have thought of the prime minister's speech the other day Chaudhry is absolutely on target in saying the media has become a very powerful world institution.

The media has the power to raise and bring down governments but in a world where symbols of hope are scarce the role of responsible media cannot be overstated.

Reverend AKUILA D
YABAKI
Executive director-CCF.

Figure 28: Yabaki, Akuila D. LTE, (1999, November 3), p. 6 [461]

In another letter, journalism graduate Stanley Simpson, now the news director of Fiji Broadcasting Corporation was critical of FT coverage of the Housing Authority interest

reduction and the negative doomsday media coverage on the issue (Fig 29). This is more thoroughly covered in our analysis of the Housing Authority reporting in Chapter 19.

While Simpson agreed that the government's information machinery left a great deal to be desired, the new government had achieved in 100 days what previous governments had not achieved in years. Note a typographical error in Fig 29 below in the second paragraph where "said" should read "sad":

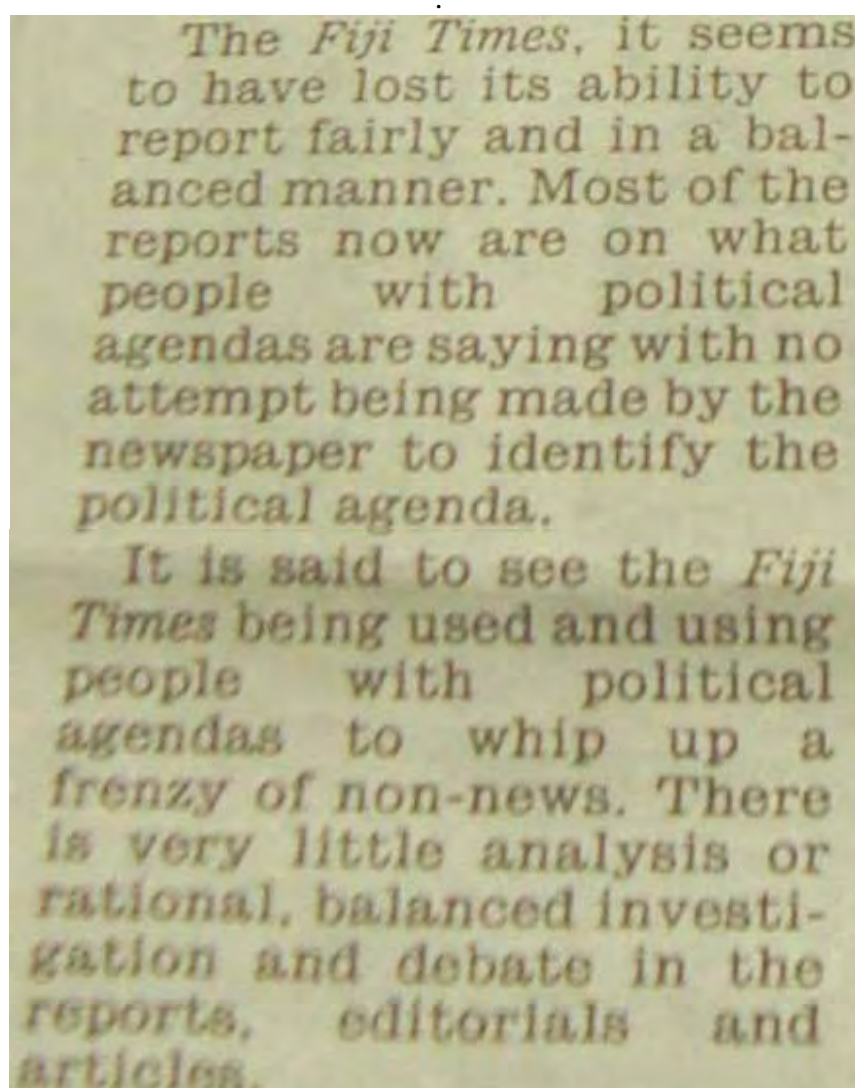


Figure 29: Simpson, Stanley, Simple maths, LTE, (1999, September 7), p. 6. [375]

Another response has been from Dildar Shah (Fig 30) who reiterated the issue on reporting of trivial matters raised earlier:

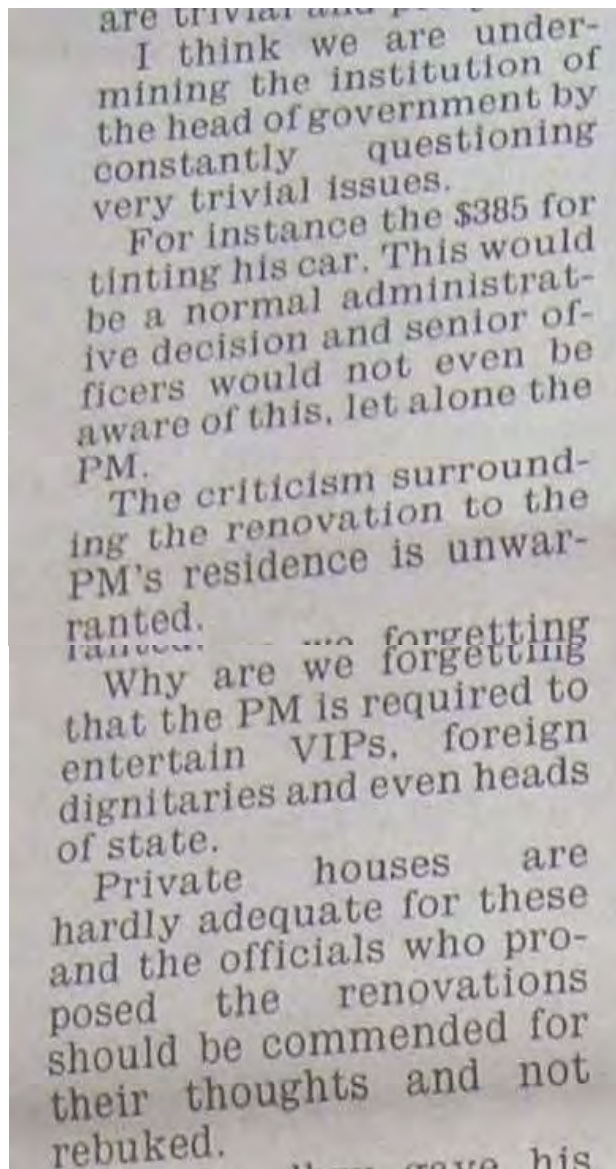


Figure 30: Shah, Dildar, Respect PM, LTE, (1999, November 8), p. 6. [465]

Government's initiative of introducing a Hindi vernacular programme, titled "Indradhanush" (The rainbow) was shot down by nationalist and racially-oriented characters like the Taukei Workers Union President, Taniela Tabu and independent nationalist MP Simione Kaitani. Both these nationalists turned a commendable government initiative, dictated by the Compact of the Constitution into a racial issue. What is evident from such reports is the tendency of FT to rely on comments from the minority insignificant but racially vocal section of the Fijian community. It is also evident that FT failed to do an analysis of what had been said by such people, and their tendency to publish such information without establishing their truth or authenticity. They quoted Kaitani as saying that the programme was intended to convert Fiji into a little India in the Pacific and the next it may want to make Hindi into a compulsory

language, leading to the genocide of the Fijian culture. Such harsh and unreasonable comments reflect on the insensitivity of the newspaper and do not fall in the media's responsibility of informing people. In fact this was helping fan the racial discord and divisions.

What FT also failed to do was to allow the full statements and explanations from the government to be reflected in its news stories to counteract the racially-incited statements of the nationalist politicians. What had become evident during the content analysis had been the numerous occasions when the government ministers, politicians or the officials had to resort to opinion column of LTE to clarify issues which the paper failed to take into account as a process of balancing its original stories. David Pickering also attacked the government for using this programme as government propaganda. What FT failed to inform was that the *Dateline* programme on the concept of which the new Hindi programme was based, was initiated by Rabuka's SVT government.

In yet another response, Vayeshnoi was forced to clarify government's position through a LTE (Fig 31). All such information should have been obtained in balancing the story.

e
e
Fiji.
It is ironic that deputy
Opposition Leader David
Pickering should lament
that the programme was
"absolute Government
propaganda" when the
themes of Dateline Fiji
which is mirrored in
Indradhanush were first
propagated by the SVT
government.
Independent parliamen-
tarian Simione Kaitani's
claim that the introduc-
tion of Indradhanush was
the beginning of Fiji's col-
onisation into a little India
is baseless and hysterical
to say the least.
Finally, there can be no
better basis for our current
efforts in introducing ver-
nacular language tele-
vision than the Compact as
contained in the Consti-
tution of Fiji.
LR VAYESHNOI
Assistant Minister,
Prime Minister's Office.

Figure 31: Vaishnoi, Lekhram, Local programme, LTE, (1999, September 8), p. 6. [412]

Stanley Simpson, earlier reported as having been critical of FT, again questioned who the "real dictators" were when the publishers and editors accused the Prime Minister of being one.

Let us know please who are the real dictators.

Who are the editors and sub-editors who decide what news is printed, how much prominence it is given, which page it goes in, whose views are heard, and what angle it takes?

The people who work behind the scenes chopping and changing the articles written by reporters, what political parties do they belong to? What business interests are they associated with?

Do any of the reporters or editors have personal relationships with politicians or those in power?

The media serves a vital need and is important for democracy. Media freedom should be protected but not at the expense of decency, respect, tolerance and fairness.

The media has no right to print whatever it wants, strangely stated by an MP

If the media is not open, transparent, accountable and responsible, all the ravings about media freedom will just sound hollow and insult the intelligence of the people.

And instead of enlightening us, the media will be pulling a wool over our eyes as our self-anointed representatives.

STANLEY SIMPSON
Lami.

Figure 32: Simpson, Stanley, Paper profits, LTE, (1999, July 7), p. 6. [1051]

In fact, racism in the paper was noted by another reader, Shameema Begum (Fig 33), within the week that Chaudhry government came to power and sounded a caution to FT to exercise greater degree of responsibility.

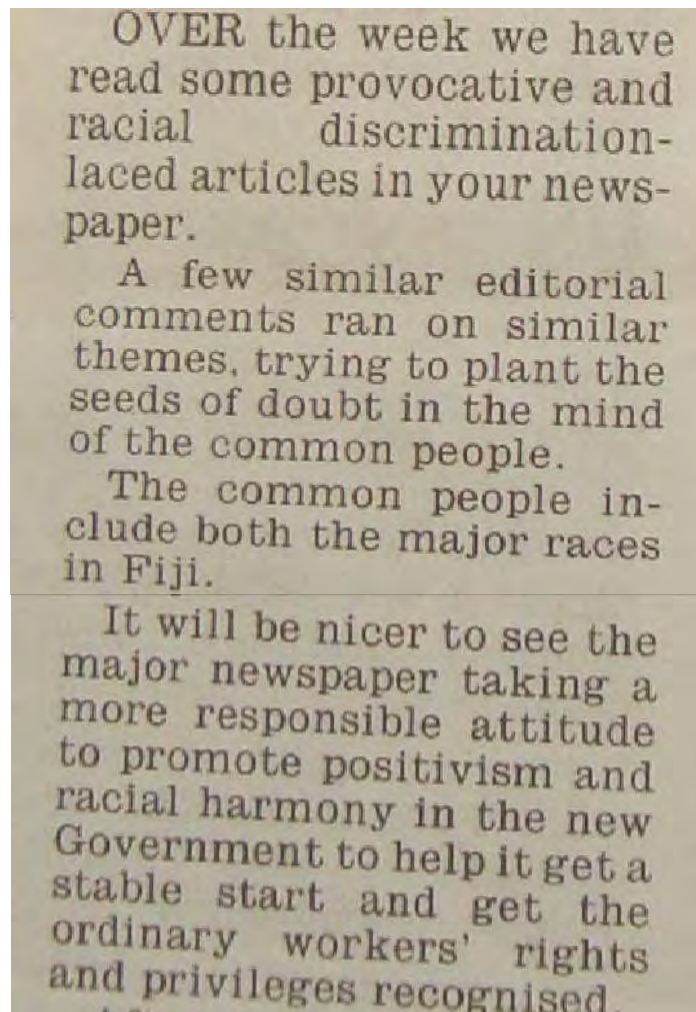


Figure 33: Begum, Shameema, Racial tunes, LTE, (1999, May 24), p. 6. [950]

8.4 Chaudhry versus *The Fiji Times*: The mother of all media wars

Media tension between FT and the government came to a head on 26 October, 1999 when MPC was invited by the Fiji Media Council to launch Fiji Media Code of Conduct and Practices. All the issues and complaints pent up over the five months of the Peoples' Coalition government came flowing in the meeting where MPC launched a lecture and attack on FT. The speech was only scantily reported in FT where only the government's intention of introducing the media controls was highlighted while all the other attacks on FT were not reported (Fig 34):

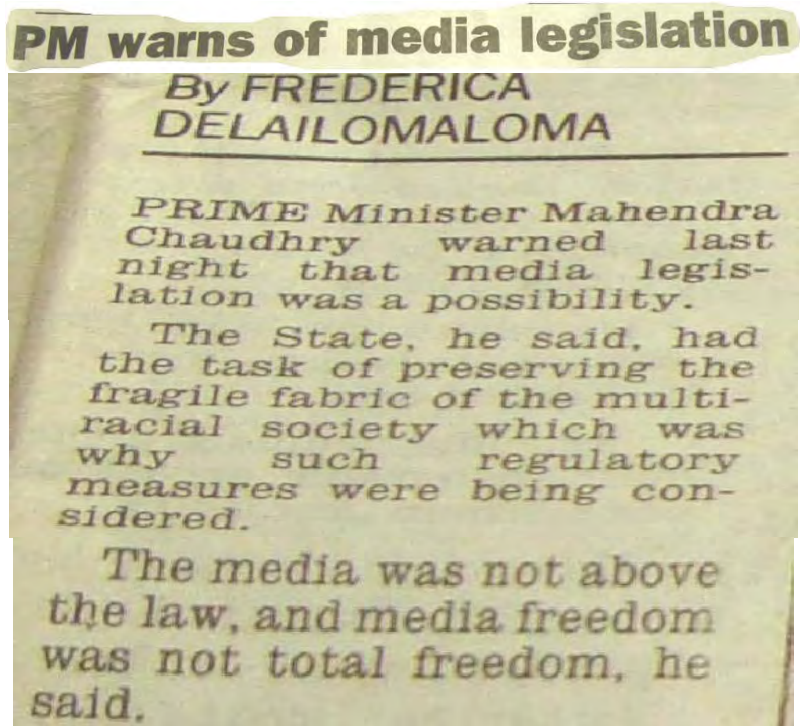


Figure 34: PM warns of media legislation, (1999, October 27), p.3. [444] [Frederica Delailomaloma]

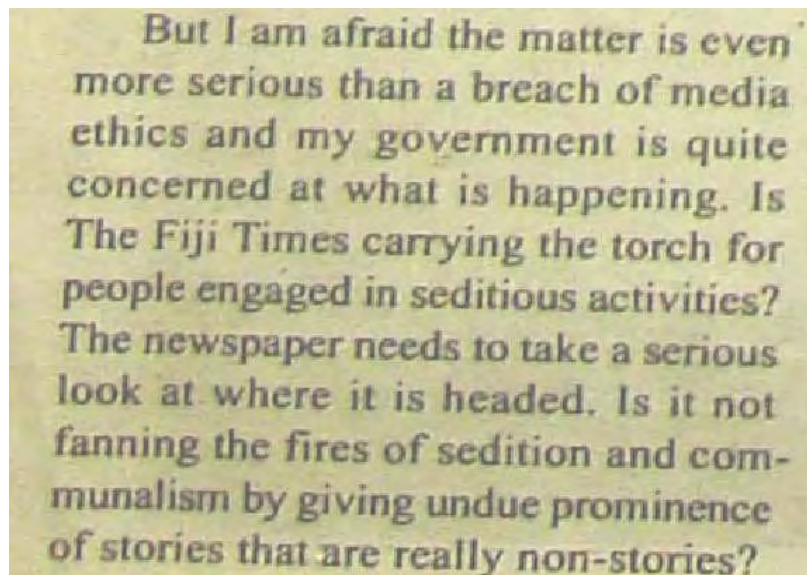
Only after criticism by the government of FT's neglect in reporting the full details of the speech did the paper give a three-page coverage of the full statement and claims made by Chaudhry, with response from FT as well. This is what MPC had to say about FT and his reference here is to FT reporter Margaret Wise, who is covered later in our analysis (Fig 35):

Since taking office, my government has had occasion to be extremely disgusted by the antics of some elements in the media who have used the medium of the newspaper and television to further their own personal agendas to discredit the government.

When day after day a particular reporter writes nothing but anti-governments stories with facts manipulated and distorted to discredit and embarrass the government, one is left in little doubt as to what the agenda of that particular reporter is.

In the process, the reporter has seriously damaged her own credibility as a reporter and that of The Fiji Times which has given these stories prominence despite the fact that they are often substantially lacking in any substance.

The manner in which these stories have been handled show serious breaches of Media ethics. Facts, conjecture, and opinion are often blurred together to create a certain desired effect. Hard news and opinion pieces should be quite distinct aspects of journalism but you will agree with me that recently the two have merged. New articles these days quite often carry comments and opinions of the journalist writing it.



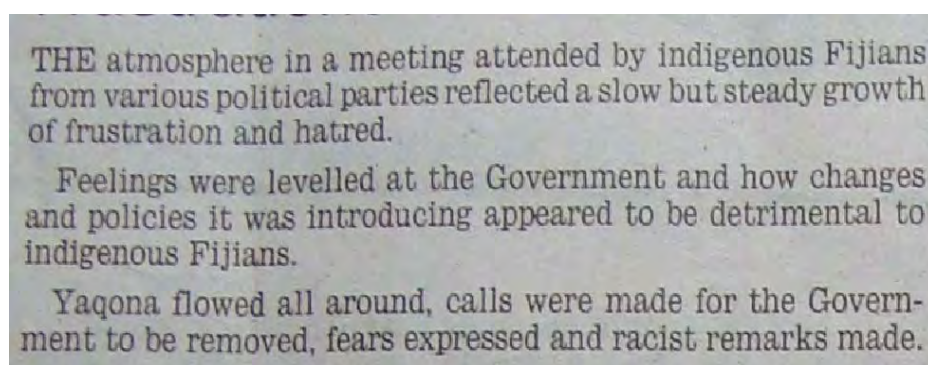
But I am afraid the matter is even more serious than a breach of media ethics and my government is quite concerned at what is happening. Is The Fiji Times carrying the torch for people engaged in seditious activities? The newspaper needs to take a serious look at where it is headed. Is it not fanning the fires of sedition and communalism by giving undue prominence of stories that are really non-stories?

Figure 35: Prime Minister's address at the launch of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics and Practice, (1999, October 30), pp. 2-3. [450-451]

This speech delivery was given wide coverage in the media, including *the Pacific Journalism Review* and is covered in our earlier section on literature review (Chaudhry, 2000). Relevant sections will be used as part of this analysis.

8.5 Over-emphasis on racial divisive politics

A meeting of some 100 indigenous people took place in Lami on 3 March, 2000, called by the lost SVT MP, Konisi Yabaki. This meeting with an insignificant number of people attracted a full page report with five provocative stories, two photos and an equally provocative editorial. The tone of the meeting was overtly racist (Fig 36):



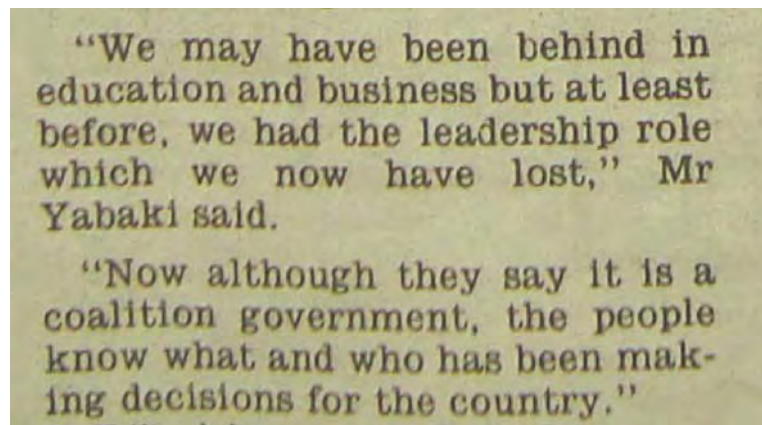
THE atmosphere in a meeting attended by indigenous Fijians from various political parties reflected a slow but steady growth of frustration and hatred.

Feelings were levelled at the Government and how changes and policies it was introducing appeared to be detrimental to indigenous Fijians.

Yaqona flowed all around, calls were made for the Government to be removed, fears expressed and racist remarks made.

Figure 36: Theory on Presidential powers: Frustrations obvious at meeting, (2000, March 4), p. 5. [638] [Matelita Ragogo]

The racial reference to the government was obvious in the story Fig 37):

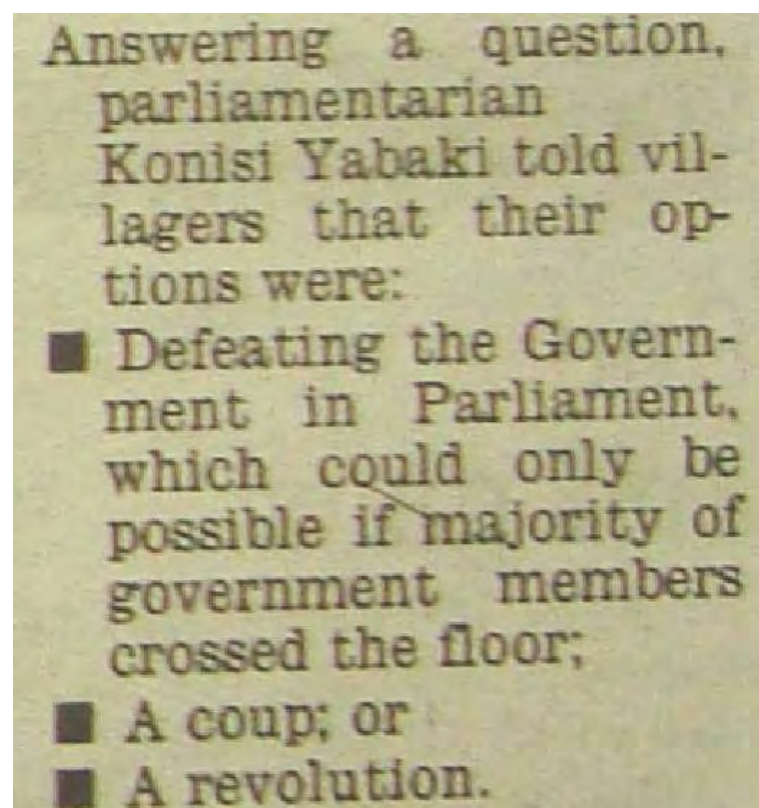


"We may have been behind in education and business but at least before, we had the leadership role which we now have lost," Mr Yabaki said.

"Now although they say it is a coalition government, the people know what and who has been making decisions for the country."

Figure 37: Power corrupts, MP warns, (2000, March 4), p. 5. [637] [Matelita Ragogo]

This meeting also discussed ways of deposing the government, which not only borders on sedition, but treason as well. This was merely reported by FT without raising any issues about its illegality or their moral or ethical duties in bringing these illegal activities to the attention of the authorities.



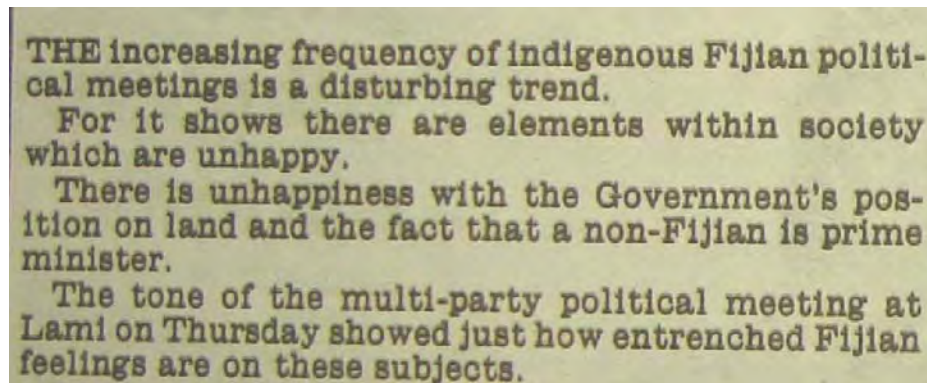
Answering a question, parliamentarian Konisi Yabaki told villagers that their options were:

- Defeating the Government in Parliament, which could only be possible if majority of government members crossed the floor;
- A coup; or
- A revolution.

Figure 38: Yabaki gives villagers option, (2000, March 4), p. 5. [637] [Matelita Ragogo]

The newspaper not only gave credence to the voice of a defeated minority, but amplified it in its editorial as well: FT spoke about a feeling of unhappiness, but to a great extent this unhappiness was amplified by such prominence given to the opposition to the government. While FT's opinion spoke about the disenchantment of the people, it

did not do its best to allay such fears and give a true picture to the people who were used by the lost politicians to cause racial agitation.



THE increasing frequency of indigenous Fijian political meetings is a disturbing trend.
For it shows there are elements within society which are unhappy.
There is unhappiness with the Government's position on land and the fact that a non-Fijian is prime minister.
The tone of the multi-party political meeting at Lami on Thursday showed just how entrenched Fijian feelings are on these subjects.

Figure 39: No other way, Editorial, (2000, March 4), p. 5. [636]

This trend is reflected in our analysis which showed that almost two-thirds of the stories relating to media issues (Table 5) reflected negatively on the government with only 6 per cent reflecting on the positive aspects. At the same time, stories falling in ‘racial agitation and protests’ (next section-Table 6)) showed similar level of negative stories. All these tended to encourage the agitators to continue in their efforts to cause instability, and even discussing ways of illegally deposing the government.

8.6 A case of ‘Manufacturing’ news

Original document: This is what Sitiveni Rabuka said in Ba about anything to do with race (Fig 40):

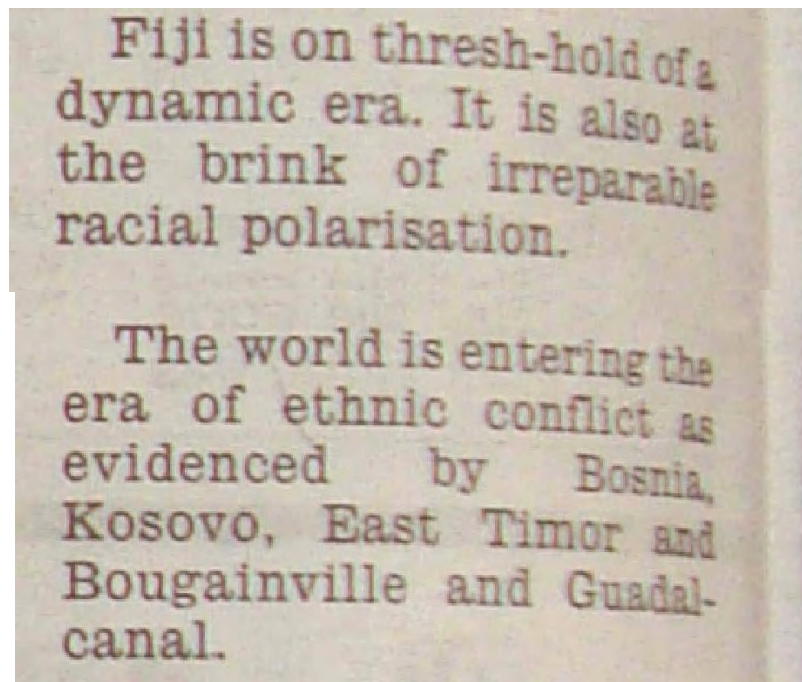


Figure 40: Sitiveni Rabuka, *Good for Ba, Good for Fiji*, address during millennium celebration in Ba on December 31, 1999, (2000, January 22), p. 34.[1086][Special supplement]

The reproduced news story: This is how that information was blown out through a provocative and screaming headline, on the first page of the first edition of FT in the new millennium, on January 1, 2000 (Fig 41):



Figure 41: Rabuka warns on race bomb, (2000, January 1), p. 1. [556] [Charles Chambers]

Nowhere in Rabuka's speech is there any mention of either a **"racial time bomb"** or any **"ticking of a time bomb."** The newspaper report gave great emphasis on Rabuka's mention of the sacrifices of the indigenous race and the landowners (Fig 42). However, he had also, fleetingly mentioned about the contribution of the indentured labourers and the business community (Fig 43), but these were prominently missing from the news story which could be characterised as a sensational and racially-biased story which failed to reveal the full picture, and also created alarm and fear in the minds of people. This is a case of journalism that manufactures a story, sets an agenda and this was ironically done on the first day of the new millennium.

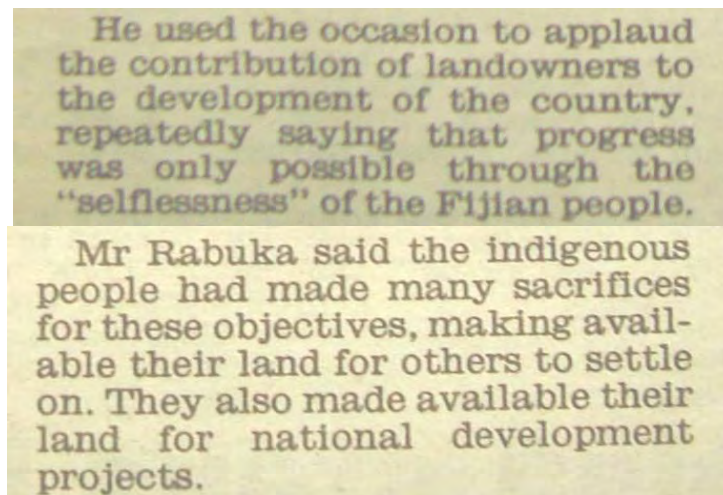


Figure 42: Rabuka warns on race bomb, (2000, January 1), p. 1. [556][Charles Chambers]

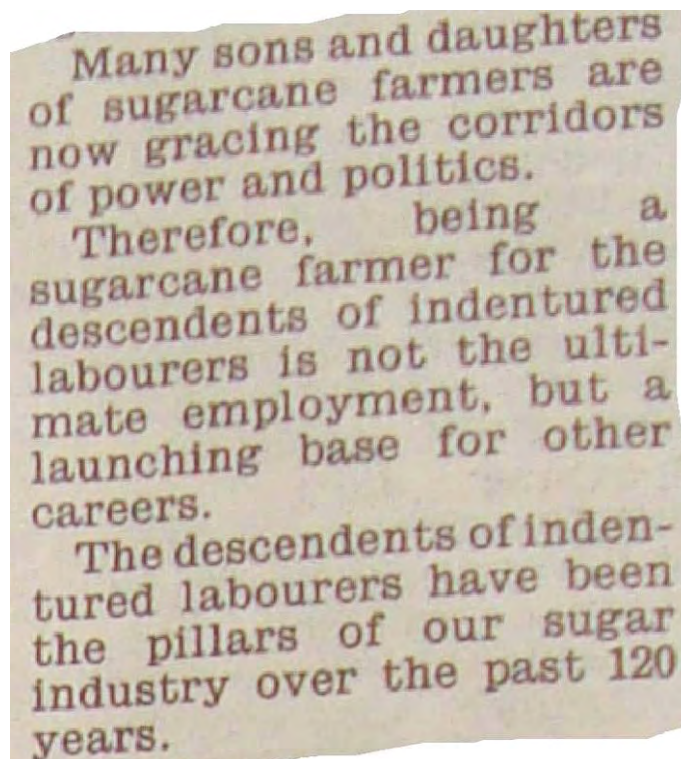


Figure 43: Sitiveni Rabuka, Good for Ba, Good for Fiji, address during millennium celebration in Ba on December 31, 1999, (2000, January 22), p. 34. [1086] [Special feature]

8.7 A case of ‘opinionated’ news item

The following news item (Fig 44), without any photos, appeared subsequent to a news conference called by the National Planning Minister, Dr Ganesh Chand. This is a classic example to journalists of how a news item should *not* be written. This is because it appears the dislike for the Minister or the government was so strong for the unnamed reporter (there was no byline) or the sub-editor, that the item was heavily spiced with

value judgements and opinions . It would have been more suitable as an editorial opinion.



Figure 44: Minister calls conference to blow trumpet, (2000, February 8), p. 2. [603] [NBL]

Subsequent to this article, a more prominent rebuttal from academic Dr Biman Prasad (with photo) and the National Federation Party (NFP) General Secretary, Attar Singh, appeared prominently. While Attar Singh was quoted in his capacity as a politician from an opposing party, Dr Biman and his criticisms were presented as views of an independent economist from the local university. What the paper failed to tell its readers is that Dr Prasad had taken leave from USP to fight the last elections against the Fiji Labour Party and was defeated. At one point, he was also made the leader of NFP, from which post he resigned after only a day to continue as an academic. Effectively, he is a former politician, now an academic, who questioned and “slammed” the Minister for “misleading people” as FT claimed. While Dr Chand was given an opportunity to reply, it was less prominent and less wordy than what the critics of the Minister presented. No data, as claimed by the Minister, were used in any of the FT stories (Fig 45):

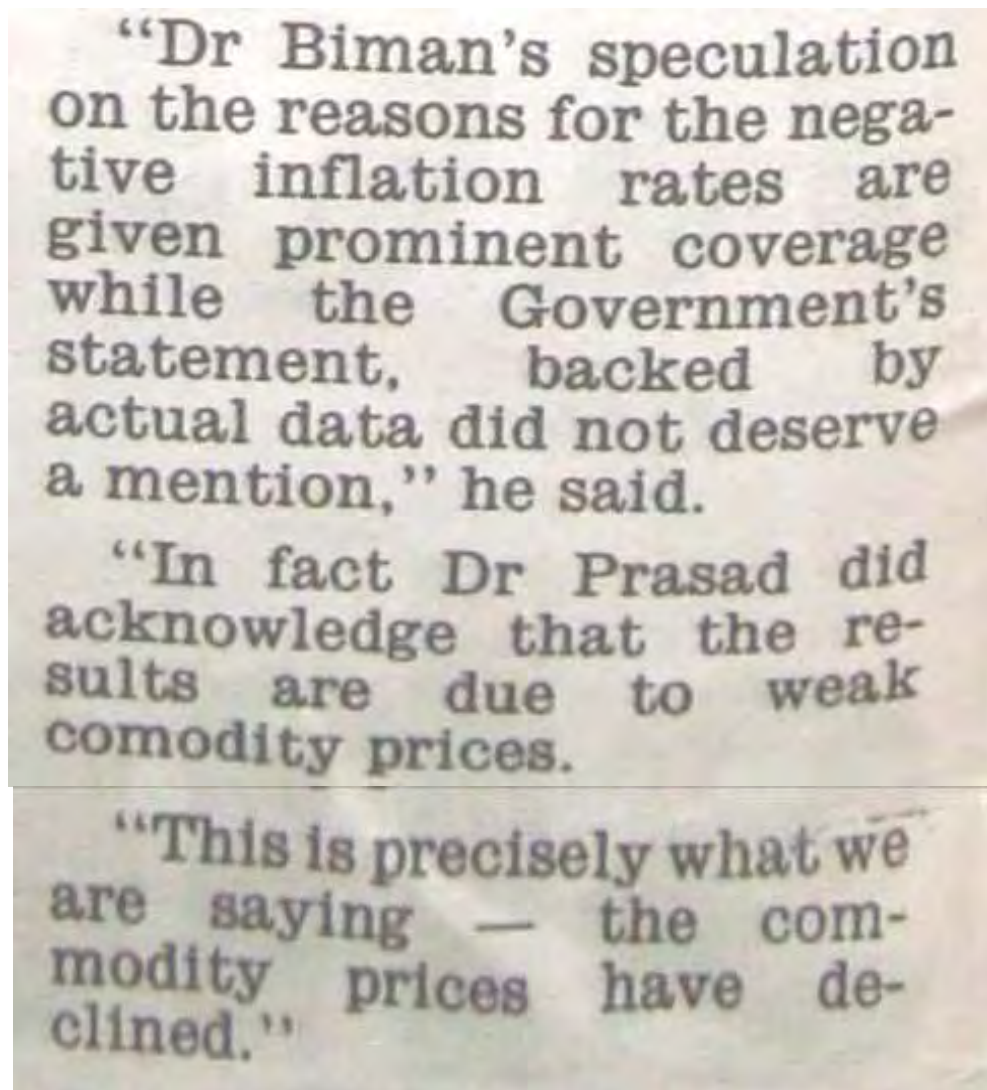


Figure 45: State proud of inflation record, (2000, February 10), p. 2. [606] [NBL]

8.8 Media debate in the Parliament before the fall of democracy

It is interesting to note that just days, in fact two days before the takeover by Speight, the relations between *The Fiji Times* and government had reached its nadir; it was now at a very unfriendly and unpleasant stage, with bouts of mudslinging in the Parliament. This is what the respective government Ministers had to say about media (Fig 46):

**HERE'S what
parliamentarians had to
say about journalists and
their work:**

□ "Most of the reporting in the media is cheap and politically slanted and clearly not in the interest of our country."

**– Assistant Minister for
Information Lekh Ram
Vayeshnoi.**

□ "There is hardly an editor in this country who is in a position to give a little more honest and creative effort to its readers on general issues which face us — the issues which bring our various communities together as one people of our fledging democracy."

**– Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forests
Poseci Bune.**

□ “The media can choose to be a watchdog, responsible, objective and fair, using its power to scrutinise and guard what is valuable, which is an accountable government for the good of the public but also acting within limits of limiting chain of fairness in the public interest and not in the self interest, to it can choose to a junkyard dog or in our language ‘rubbish dump dog’ or a pet dog, loudly, chaser snoop, unrestrained after bits of rubbish of little real use, where what becomes news is dictated by market forces and economics of the information industry dictates what news is, rather than as a public service and where the scandalous becomes the norm.”

**– Assistant Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office,
Adi Ema Tagicakibau.**

Figure 46: What they said, (2000, May 18), p. 5. [812]

This is how FT responded through its editorial (Fig 47):

A crying shame

DEBATE in Parliament has, once again, degenerated to such an extent as to bring shame to that once-revered institution.

This time three government members in their attack on the media served only to bring disrepute to themselves and the People's Coalition.

During debate on the Freedom of Information Bill, Agriculture Minister Poseci Bune and assistant ministers Ema Tagicakibau and Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi launched in to yet another spiel on their favourite enemy.

In doing so they labelled the nation's journalists as junk yard dogs, liars, unqualified and irresponsible.

These are charges no minister would dare make without the comfort of parliamentary privilege.

The relationship between Mahendra Chaudhry's coalition and the media in this country has never been amicable.

For the last 12 months there have been constant sniping sessions between the camps.

Lately there have been more than one attack on individual journalists.

In a genuinely democratic country there is criticism of government.

Without it a nation's leaders cannot know how the population really feels.

If this government cannot accept criticism from the media, its claim of openness and transparency is hypocritical and its support for the Freedom of Information Bill is a farce.

Figure 47: A crying shame, Editorial, (2000, May 18), p. 6 [813]

The above (Fig 47) appeared on 18 May 2000. But the next day's story is better told by the accompanying cartoon below, because the government had been taken hostage (Fig 48):



Figure 48: Cartoon depicting the Speight takeover on 19 May, 2000, (2000, May 20), p. 6. [829]

8.9 The response from the ‘hostage’ Minister

This is how Poseci Bune retorted in the following pages (Fig 49). But it was too late. It appears he had produced that release to FT before leaving for Parliament on the morning of 19 May, 2000. This is because he was made a hostage by Speight and his “soldiers” later that morning, along with the other government parliamentarians. His letter to the editor appeared in FT on 20 May when he was in Speight’s custody. He summarised the responsibilities of media and responded to issues raised by FT in its editorial:

And it is not the debate in Parliament which is bringing shame but the notorious record of the news media for irresponsible, inaccurate, unbalanced and skirt journalism which has brought shame to the Fourth Estate and to the nation.

The relationship between the Government and media "has never been amicable" through no fault of the Government but rather the media.

The prime minister gave more press conferences as prime minister than most of those who preceded him.

He took over the reins of the office with every intention of creating and maintaining a positive relationship with the media.

But a relationship cannot be one-sided.

The amity dwindled as a

result of the continued practice of the media to be irresponsible and inaccurate and to provide to readers no balance in news reports.

Freedom of the Press carries with it certain obligations and responsibilities, like other freedoms.

Some political reporters became the pawns of politicians and reported anything the politician wanted published, inaccurate or not.

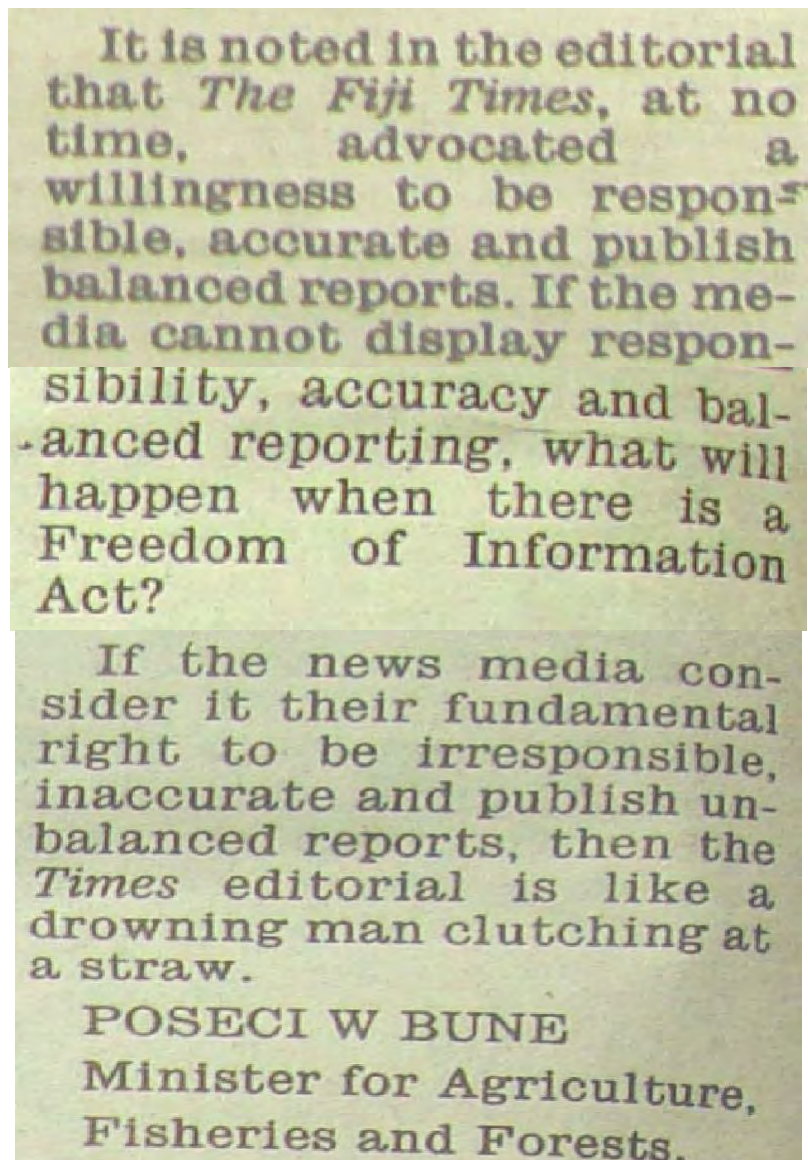


Figure 49: Poseci Bune, Crying shame, LTE, (2000, May 20), p. 6 [830]

8.10 Rika's obsession with Chaudhry-bashing

While deputy editor Netani Rika's columns made interesting and good satirical reading, his obsession with Chaudhry-bashing was quite evident. Not that there is anything wrong with that for a journalist who has all the liberty to make fun of Chaudhry and his "chamchas", the hangers on and yes men who laughed at his jokes even if they were not funny. What is a matter of concern is his lack of perspective in picking up on issues that concern the public. While he was crying for Chaudhry's housing allowance of \$10,000 a year (Fig 50) which, like all Ministers and previous Prime Ministers, Chaudhry was entitled to, he missed the bigger picture.

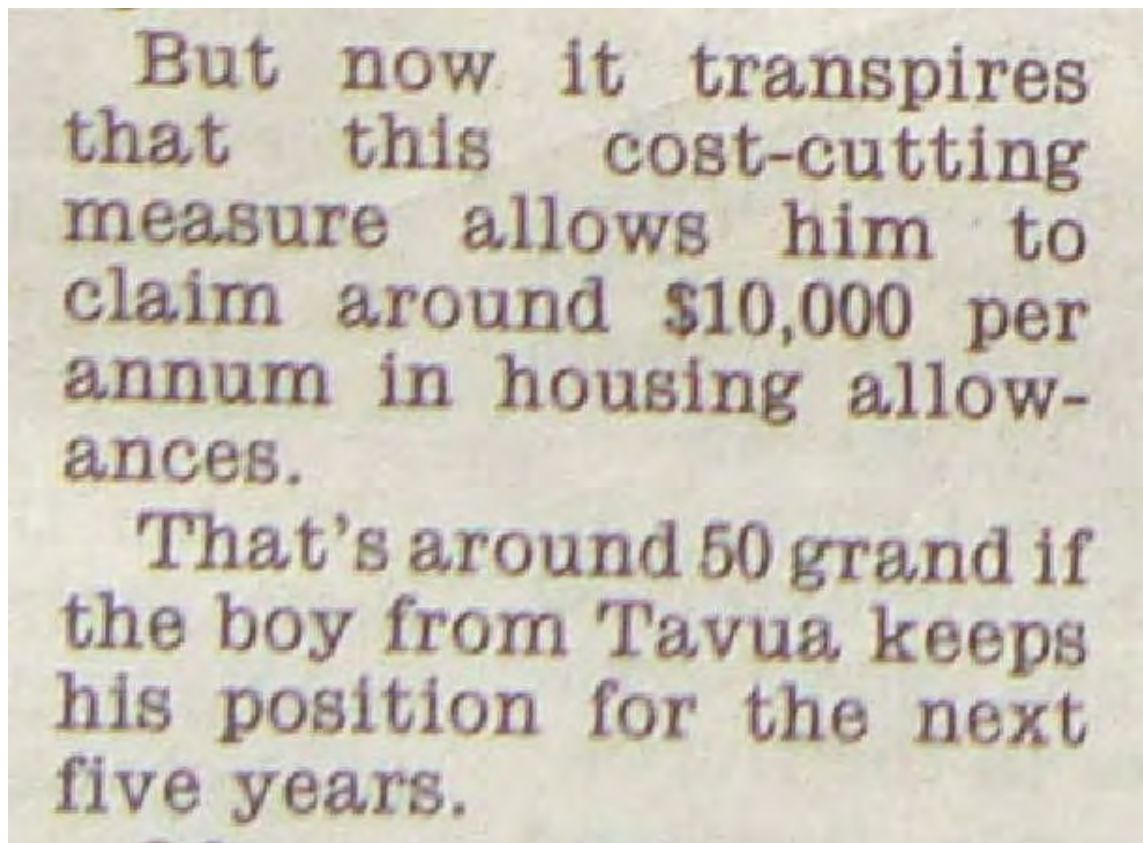


Figure 50 : Netani Rika, Just a few home truths: On the Bright Side, (1999, July 3), p. 7. [1047]

While Rika was crying for taxpayers' \$10,000 housing entitlements of an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, he at the same time, was apparently unaware of the fact that the Rabuka government had heavily overpaid by \$1 million to a Fijian company, Strategic Air Services (Fig 51). However, this issue failed to attract his attention. It appears that making jest of everything coming out of the new government was in line with the overall journalism stance of FT, its senior journalists and its gatekeepers.

By MATELITA RAGOGO

AIRPORTS Fiji Limited is embroiled in another controversy after Attorney-General Anand Singh told Parliament of unlawful and dubious dealings within the company.

Mr Singh said a company contracted to provide navigational services for AFL was paid \$1 million more than what it was actually owed.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, Mr Singh highlighted the following:

- Tenders were awarded before they were advertised. Fire Control Fiji Limited was awarded a three-year contract valued at \$6,617,605.

In a letter to Fire Control, AFL said tenders would be called for but assured the company that it "had nothing to worry about".

- Strategic Air Services, a company set up by Air Traffic Control workers, was paid \$1 million more.

Figure 51 : Airport firm reeks of bad deals: A-G, (1999, July 2), p. 1. [1043] [Matelita Ragogo]

Chapter 9: Racial agitation, protests and threats

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Racial agitation, protests and threats	123	15	12.2	79	64.2	29	23.6

Table 6: Racial agitation, protests and threats, May 1999 to May 2000.

Another issue of utmost importance in the content analysis is the racial issues, threats and protests with racial bias. This is because one of the catch calls that came immediately after the 1999 election was purely based on race. Politicians and nationalists picked this and took maximum advantage of the situation, jumping on the bandwagon of FT where they perhaps found an ally and detected sympathy from Fijian reporters with an easy place to air their grievances without restriction, with front page headlines.

9.1 Nationalists protest march against ‘Indian’ government

Within days of the Chaudhry government coming to power, FT became a medium for the nationalist elements to vent their racism and seditious activities under the guise of freedom of media. Provocative photos and racially-emotive terms (Fig 52) were used and allowed to be published without any restraint.



Figure 52: Firebrand- nationalist leader Sakeasi Butadroka at a meeting yesterday, Photo, (1999, May 22), p. 2. [946][Dionesia Tabureguci]

While on one side the editorials spoke about good governance and hinted at not allowing the shadowy troublemakers their chance of obtaining power through other than democratic means, the paper nevertheless continued giving opportunity for such shadowy figures to blow their trumpet through FT with relative ease, such as in Fig 53 below:.

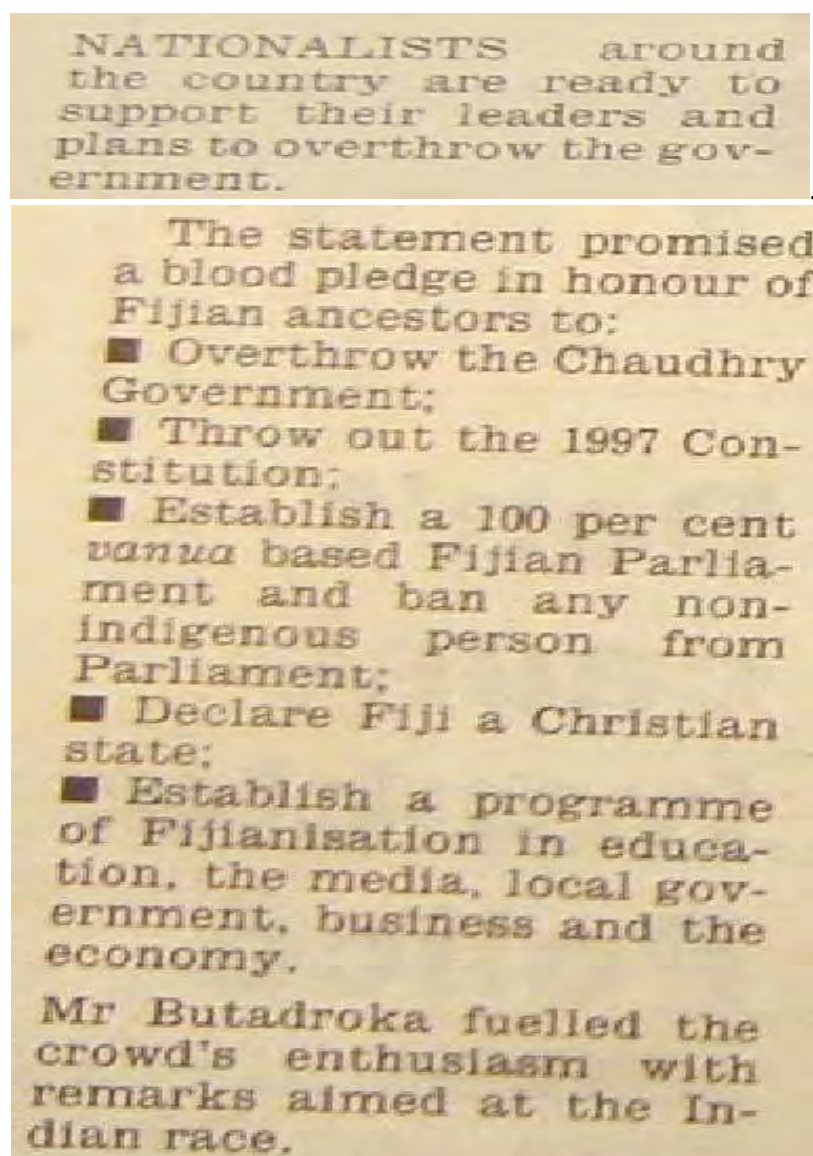
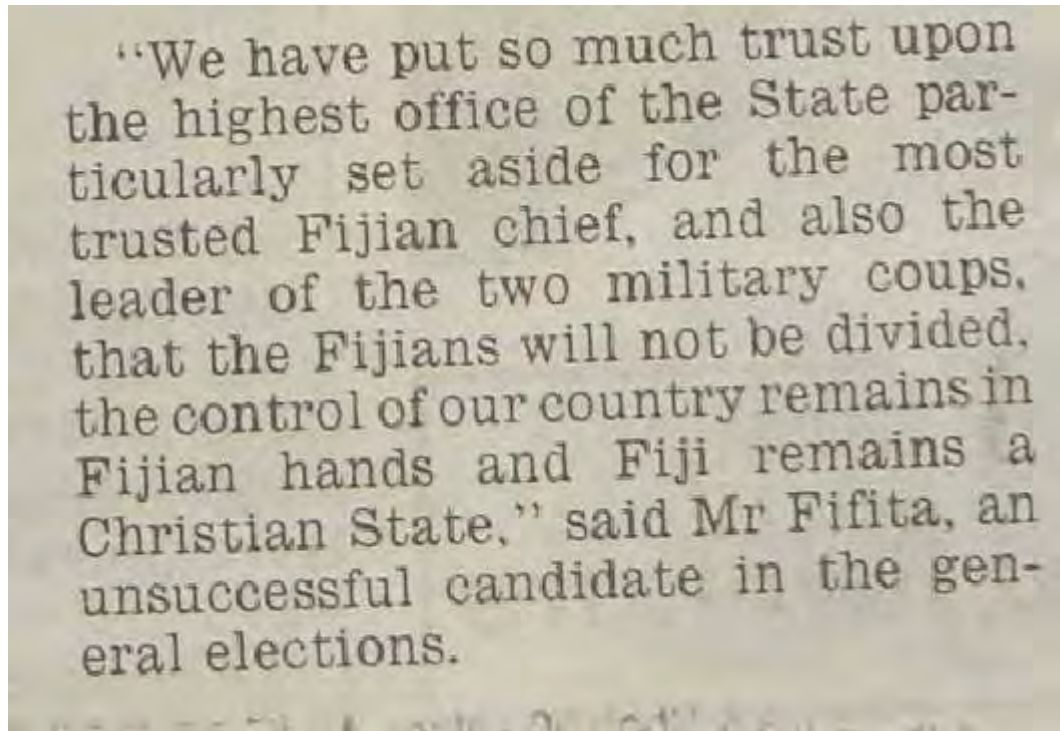


Figure 53: Nationalists plan protest march, (1999, May 22), P. 2. [946][Dionesia Tabureguci]

Within days, a page one article in FT proclaimed that another nationalist party, the Party of Truth, had joined Butadroka's march and was calling on the President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, to resign. The article did not have a byline, and this party has never been heard of, nor was its leader, a failed candidate in the last election with suspect following. Yet he received so much attention. One may question, is it possible for

anybody on the street to call on the highest office in the country to resign on the ground that the President had allowed the voice of people, the Constitutional requirements and democracy to prevail by allowing an “Indian” as Fiji’s prime minister? It is surprising that despite its commendable editorials on the principle of democracy, FT was giving prominent first and third page space to such unknown characters to raise racial agitation bordering on sedition and treason (Fig 54):



“We have put so much trust upon the highest office of the State particularly set aside for the most trusted Fijian chief, and also the leader of the two military coups, that the Fijians will not be divided, the control of our country remains in Fijian hands and Fiji remains a Christian State,” said Mr Fifita, an unsuccessful candidate in the general elections.

Figure 54: Party joins nationalists’ protest, (1999, June 1), p. 3. [970][NBL]

9.2 Racial issues

No sooner had the Chaudhry government come to power than the Fijian groups hiding in all nooks and crannies came into prominence and started raising racially divisive issues.

Another previously unknown group, calling itself the Matabose ni Taukei ni Vanua, wanted to change the constitution so that non-Fijians did not get any leadership positions. This unheard of group was led by a Ra chief (Fig 55). It appeared to be a makeshift organisation which had only cropped up to cause racial tension and opposition to the new government. Such groups received prominence through race-hate and racially-divisive statements getting headlines in FT.



Figure 55: Group wants Fijians to lead, (1999, August 24), p. 2. [348][Matelita Ragogo]

Parliament is an institution where politicians can say anything without restriction; hence racially-inciting statements are uttered there every now and then. However, when there is a new government, and there is an element of racial agitation and distrust and divisions among the people, it is the duty and obligations of a responsible media to exercise restraint. This was not done by FT. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, who was then Leader of the Opposition, had been known to be among those behind Rabuka's 1987 coup and also somebody who harboured racist tendencies. In a speech about the new home for the prime minister, MPC wished to give the official residence of the former Prime Minister Rabuka to the Vice President. On this issue, Ratu Inoke accused MPC of racism (Fig 56):

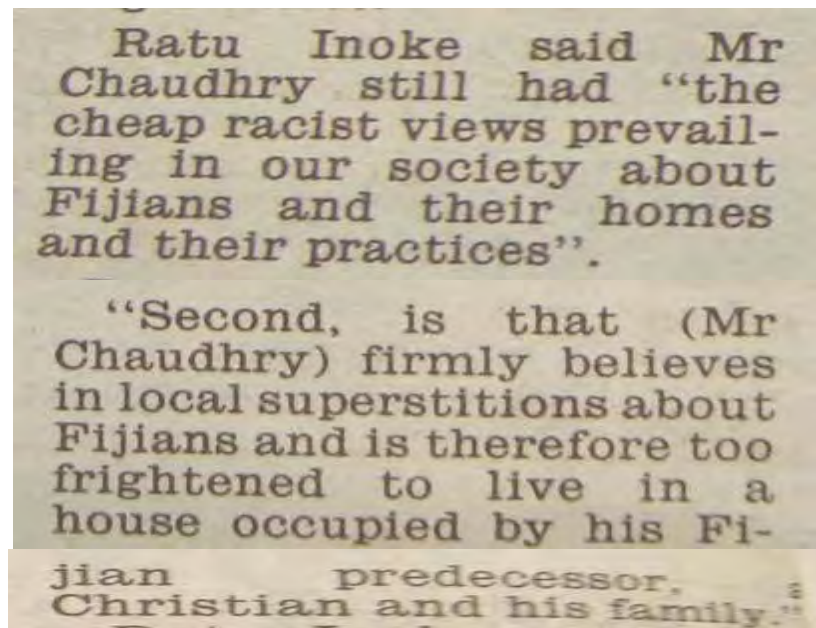


Figure 56: PM accused of racism, (1999, June 30), p. 4 [1038] [Matelita Ragogo]

9.3 Threat of violence, warnings, instability, aided by sensational headings and stories

Threats of violence, warnings and force appeared to be the rule where the chiefs, landowners and Fijian villagers tended to promote such actions against the Indo-Fijians and the leadership of the new government. Such activities got prominence and pronouncements through FT headlines and they appeared to project uncertainty, insecurity, anxiety and fear, especially among the Indo-Fijian population. As reported by Gaunder (2006) in Chapter 4 (4.3), during 1920 and 1921, FT had been the main tool for conveying pro-Fijians and anti-Indian stand through bold headings, stories and editorials that caused unease and fanned the flames of racial discord (p. 8). That was some eight decades ago. It appears FT had not abandoned its anti-Indian stance at the dawn of the new millennium, as evidenced by the following headlines, most of them aimed at Indo-Fijians, illustrated in Figures 57 to 87:



Figure 57: Chief warns of trouble, 1999, September 10), p. 3) [405] [Charles Chambers]



Figure 58: Fijian civil servants warn against reshuffle, (1999, August 28), p. 3. [352][Margaret Wise]



Figure 59: Tora attacks PM, (1999, September 26), p. 4[380] [Frederica Delailomaloma]



Figure 60: Defiant clan to cut off water, (1999, August 31), p. 1 [356] [Avinesh Gopal]



Figure 61: Landowners threaten to close school, (1999, October 4), p. 3. [420] [NBL]



Figure 62: Threat to close (water) site in seven days, (1999, October 14), p. 5 [424] [Avinesh Gopal]



Figure 63 : Closure threat on airport, (1999, December 10), p. 1. [503] [NBL]



Figure 64: Adi Senimili warns Chaudhry, (1999, December 31), p. 3. [554][Matelita Ragogo]



Figure 65: Landowners up in arms, (1999, October 23), p. 5. [435][Avinesh Gopal]



Figure 66: Chiefs warn on bills, (1999, November 2), p. 1 [459] [Margaret Wise]



Figure 67 : State under fire, (2000, February 1), p. 3 [596] [NBL]



Figure 68: Threat on MPs, (1999, October 26), p. 1. [442] [Rosemary Baleiverata]

The above story (Fig 68) which reported Chaudhry as seeking additional security was denied by MPC at the launch of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics on 26 October, 1999. He had effectively accused FT of fabricating the story which was published without establishing all the facts.

Today Fiji Times carries a classic example of doctors that I have spoken of. This morning the paper carried screaming headlines. "Threats on MPs: Chaudhry wants more security": this is sheer concoction. I have not asked for security at my house to be increased. In fact, I feel like a prisoner surrounded by all these police officers. Worse still, the officer quoted by the paper, Peter Blake, denies having made any such statements to The Fiji Times. His correct statement is in The Fiji Sun today. I have a letter here from Inspector Blake which categorically denies making that statement.

Figure 69: Prime Minister's address at the launch of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics and Practice, (1999, October 30), p. 3. [451]



Figure 70: NLTB boss (Qarikau) warns Chaudhry, (1999, November 90, p. 3 [469] [Margaret Wise]



Figure 71: Bau chiefs warn PM, (2000, February 10), p. 2 [607] [NBL]

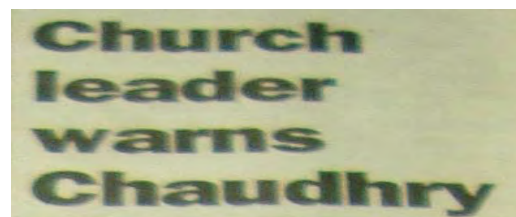


Figure 72: Church leader warns Chaudhry, (1999, December, 3), p. 1. [493] [NBL]

**Nationalist
warns on
PM's China
trip invite**

Figure 73: Nationalists warn on PM's China trip invite, (1999, December 14), p. 10. [519] [NBL]

PM under fire
Fijians sidelined: Ratu Inoke

Figure 74: PM under fire, (1999, November 27), p. 4. [481] [NBL]

**Chiefs' paper wants
to oust Chaudhry**

Figure 75: Chief's paper wants to oust Chaudhry, (1999, September 29), p. 2. [388] [Charles Chambers]

'On brink of racial polarisation'
**Rabuka
warns
on race
bomb**

Figure 76: Rabuka warns on race bomb, (2000, January 1), p. 1. [557][Charles Chambers]

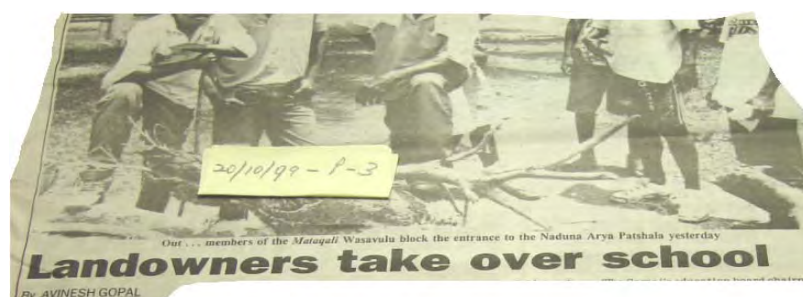


Figure 77: Landowners take over [Naduna] school, (1999, October 20), p. 3. [429] [Avinesh Gopal]

**PM should quit
says Rewa MP** **MP warns
State
of revolt**

Figure 78: PM should quit says Rewa MP, MP warns state of revolt, (2000, February 24), p. 3. [620] [Matelita Ragogo & Sudesh Kissun]



Figure 79: Holy land, (2000, March 2), p. 1 [633] [Davila Waqausa]



Figure 80: Rabuka's warning, (2000, March 16), p. 1. [650] [NBL]

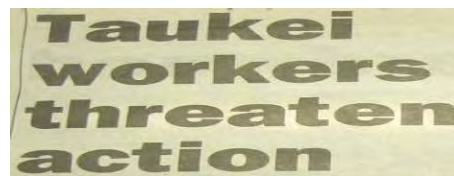


Figure 81: Taukei workers threaten action, (1999, March 28), p. 8. [680][NBL]

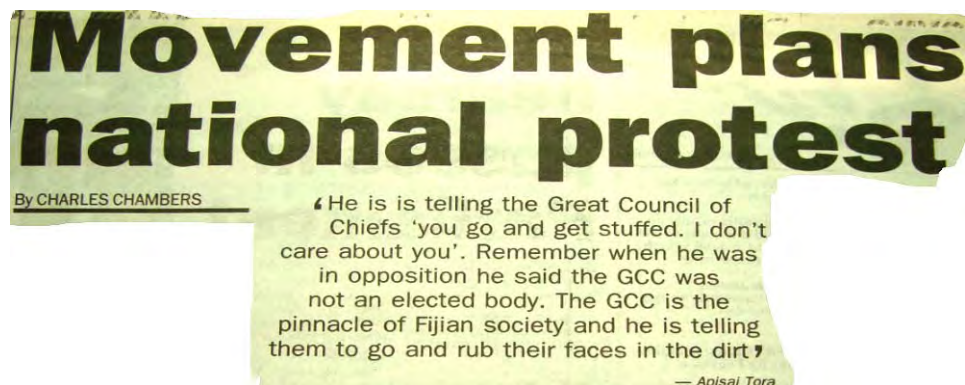


Figure 82: Movement plans national protest, (2000, April 5), p. 3. [701][Charles Chambers]



Figure 83: We'll seize land, (2000, March 6), p. 1 [704] [Jo Makaba]



Figure 84: Landowners shut office, (2000, April 11), p. 3. [725][Frederica Delailomaloma]



Figure 85: Get up, stand up, Qarikau urges Ra, (2000, April 14), p. 3 [733] [Matelita Ragogo]

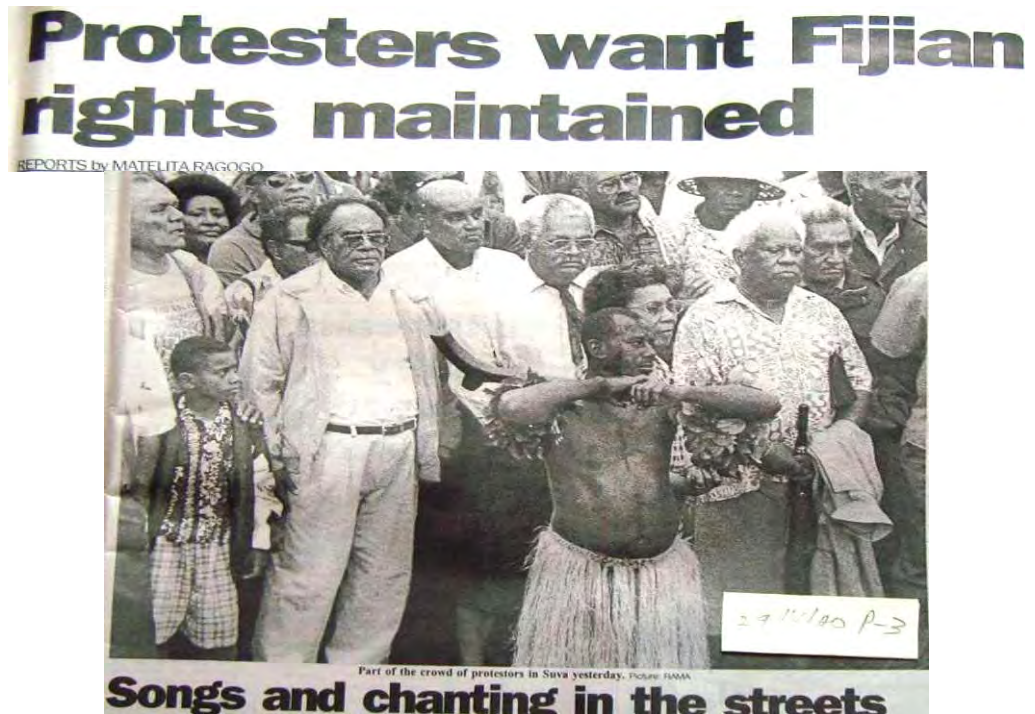


Figure 86: Protesters want Fijian rights maintained, Songs and chanting in the streets, (2000, April 29), p. 3. [765] [Matelita Ragogo]

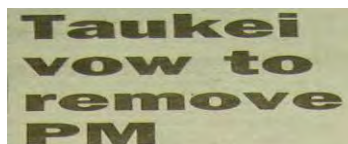


Figure 87: Taukei vow to remove PM, (2000, May 19), p. 3. [816] [NBL]

Plans, thoughts and ideas of removing the “Indian” government of Chaudhry had been mooted and hatched within weeks of the People’s Coalition government coming to power. This was substantiated by Jone Dakavula, a former employee of SVT Party, subsequent to Speight putsch. See Figure 216 in Chapter 24 for explanation. These thoughts were given wide publicity in the media, especially FT, despite the fact that such statements were bordering on sedition and the tone of racism was contrary to the Fiji Media Code of Conduct that Fiji media professed to be following. In subtle ways, the newspaper continued to fan such divisive sentiments. The cartoon below (Fig 88) is an example where FT was acting in the role of a messenger of doomsday on Housing

Authority interest reduction, which the government was ultimately able to achieve. This is covered in the Housing Authority section of the analysis. However the message coming out of the cartoon below is distasteful and verging on sedition when it equates cutting interest rate to “cutting the government”, which means its removal through illegal means:



Figure 88 : Cartoon- I wish somebody would cut the government – on housing interest cuts, Cartoon, (1999, September 4) p. 6. [367]

9.4 A case of media dereliction of responsibility

A case in question was that of the provocative headline below where a Ba chief, Adi Senimili Cagilaba “supposedly” said racially inciting and seditious statements as reported by FT. However, when spoken to, the chief denied making those statements saying she was told by some people to “let it go” (Figures 89 and 90). This is a serious allegation which was not followed up by any media to those shadowy characters who were using chiefs as their mouthpiece for their seditious and perhaps treasonable activities.

Chief warns of war

By RUCI MAFI

A MAJOR landowner yesterday warned of bloodshed if attempts are made to alter arrangements under the Agriculture Landlord and Tenant Act.

Adi Senimili Cagilaba said there was no need for dialogue with the Government as indigenous Fijians wanted their land back.

And she warned that if that was not done, landowners would evict tenants and take their belongings.

"Government does not own our land and if attempts are made to take that important asset away from us than we will die fighting and we will kill to get it back."

Figure 89: Chief warns of war, (1999, July 31), p. 1 [328] [Ruci Mafi]

Police grill radical chief

By ROSEMARY BALEIVERATA

Adi Senimili has denied making the comments, saying that "what I said was not how it came out in the paper. When I tried to retract it after it came out, I was advised by some people to let it go".

She did not identify those people.

A *Fiji Times* report in which she warned of potential bloodshed if landowners' needs were not met, was the reason for the police visit.

Figure 90: Police grill radical chief, (1999, October 6), p. 1. [421] [Rosemary Baleiverata]

Mahendra Chaudhry had raised this issue in his controversial Media Council speech when he questioned the media ethics and accountability of FT (Fig 91):

Then there is the front page story that quoted Nailaga high chief Adi Seimili of threatening bloodshed on the land issue. The story was alarmist, designed to create fear and racial tension. Adi Seimili has since denied having used the word bloodshed. The *Fiji Times* chose not to run her denial. Fortunately, TV and The Daily Post did - I am not sure about the radio stations.

Figure 91: Prime Minister's address at the launch of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics and Practice, (1999, October 30), p. 3. [451]

Chapter 10: Land

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Land	123	9	7.3	88	71.5	26	21.2

Table 7: Land issues and controversies, May 1999 to May, 2000.

Land has been an area that has been exploited by generations of politicians to win support and manipulate the landowners as well as the tenants, thus politicising land issues. Land in Fiji has been debated more often as a political tool rather than as an economic commodity. In our content analysis, a high percentage, over 71 per cent of the articles in this category was used and presented unfavourably and in a negative manner to project the new People's Coalition Government in bad light. There appeared to be a great deal of misinformation or rather lack of proper information and knowledge on the land protection via the NLTB Act, and through the supreme law of the country, the 1997 Constitution. Despite the sizeable majority of the Peoples Coalition Government, no amendments in any land laws could be made without the consent of the Senate where the Great Council of Chiefs had the numbers stacked in their favour. It was the responsibility of the media to inform the public on the truth about the supposed land-grab scheme of the Chaudhry's "Indian" government which had more Fijian cabinet ministers than Indo-Fijian ones, and remove the apprehension and the spread of misinformation. On the contentious issue of the Land Use Commission (hereafter referred to as LUC), while FT editorials spoke about the lack of information on the subject, it did little to provide the information or present any analytical or thought-provoking articles. It degenerated into mere copy-journalist mode, mouthing the agitation of the opposition. Like in most other issues, government ministers and officials had to resort to the letters to editor column to inform the public on LUC and clarify the misconceptions propagated by politicians and spread by a media which appeared to be less than neutral on the matter, evident in the negative issues published and a discord between its editorial comments and actual news stories.

10.1 Politicisation of Land

Land has always been a major political issue in Fiji and Chaudhry had been warned by the early editorials to tread carefully on this issue and make use of a select committee acceptable to the landowners to commence discussion on the subject that has been smouldering like a volcano since Fiji's independence in 1970, and has seen no solution.

Despite the warnings and advice, Chaudhry proceeded with open discussion, and even tried to sideline the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) and the chiefs, wishing to directly win favours of the landowners. This had been a cardinal sin. MPC's poor interpersonal skills saw him waging fights with people who he should have befriended. One such person was Maika Qarikau, general manager of NLTB. Our analysis will show how this action cost the government dearly.

The editorial columns of FT in the earlier days had been supportive of a solution for land problems and gave commendable suggestions. Land had been recognised as a potentially explosive issue which needed dialogue for a solution (Fig 92):

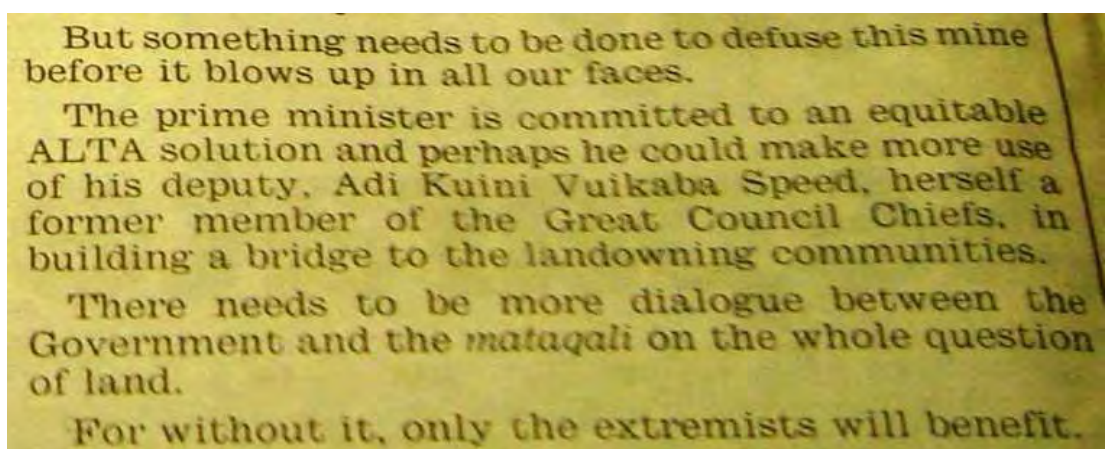


Figure 92: Time for dialogue, Editorial, (1999, July 22), p. 6. [322]

Apisai Tora (Fig 93) had been working closely with extremist elements for decades, so when he spoke, it should have been taken seriously. In fact he had predicted a coup.

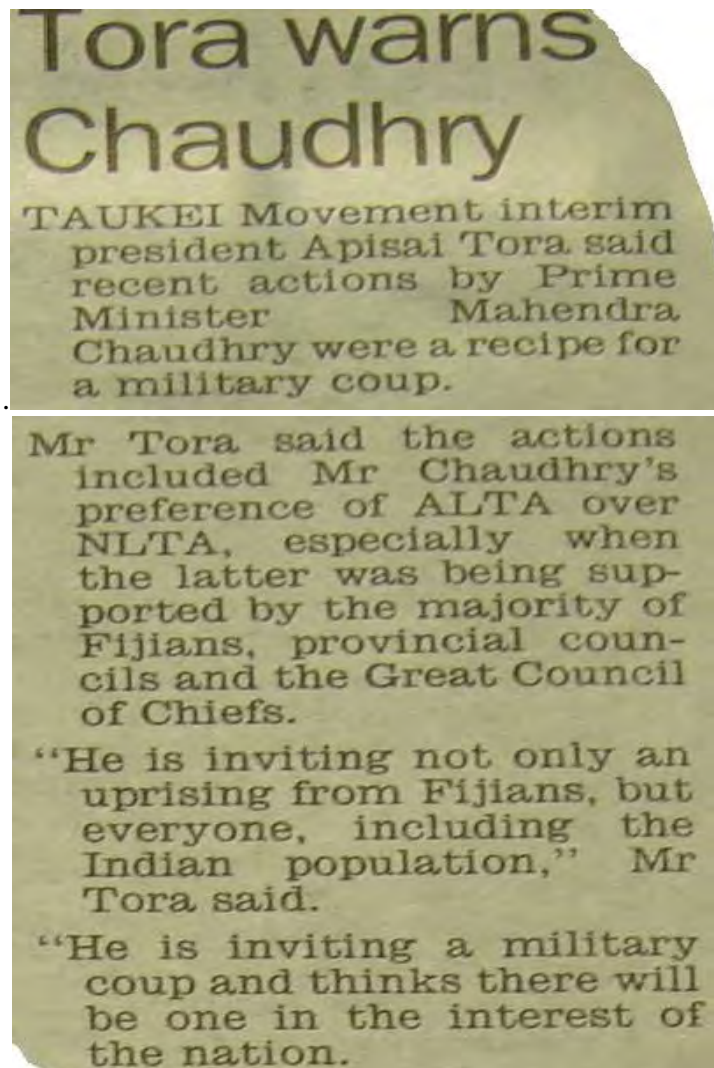


Figure 93: Tora warns Chaudhry, (2000, April 8), p. 3 [716] [NBL]

10.2 Tension on land highlighted in the media

Headlines in the papers (Figures 94 to 110) sensationalised the tension created by the land issue which Chaudhry was not in a position to resolve because of what has been regarded as his arrogance and unwillingness to heed sound advice.



Figure 94 : Landowners want land back: Rabuka, (1999, September 20), p. 3[389] [Jillian Hicks]

ALTA out: Chiefs

Figure 95 : ALTA out: Chiefs, (1999, September 18), p. 1. [392] [Margaret Wise]

Racist group in land talks

By MARGARET WISE

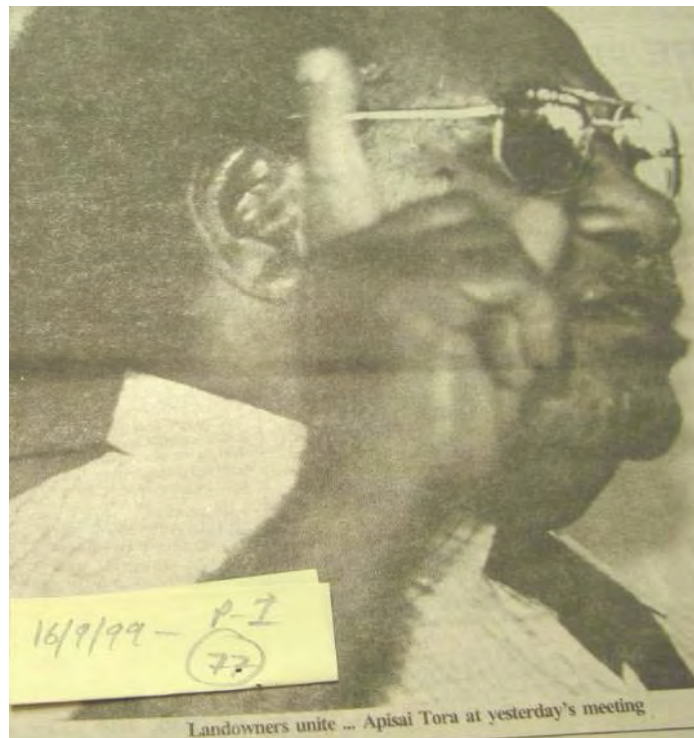


Figure 96 : Racist group in land talks, (1999, September 16), p. 1. [398] [Margaret Wise]

State throws out NLTB taskforce report

Figure 97 : State throws out NLTB taskforce report, (1999, September 8), p. 1. [410] [NBL]

Party divided over ALTA debate

Figure 98 : Party divided over ALTA debate, (1999, September 8). p. 1. [413] [NBL]



**Land
plan
angers
party**

Figure 99 : Land plan angers party, (1999, November 14), p. 1. [471] [Ruci Mafi]



**Chiefs reject
land proposal**

Figure 100 : Chiefs reject land LUC) proposal, (1999, November 26), p. 1. [475] [Sainimili Lewa]



**Senators reject
land proposal**

Figure 101 : Senators reject land proposal, (1999, November 9), p. 1. [467] [Margaret Wise]



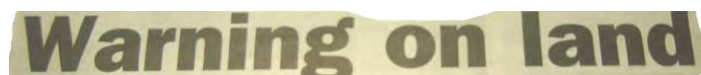
**Chiefs reject
cane lease
renewals**

Figure 102 : Chiefs reject cane lease renewals, (1999, June 10), p. 3. [983] [Charles Chambers]



**Anger
over
land
move**

Figure 103 : Anger over land move, (2000, April 4), p. 3. [696][NBL]



Warning on land

Figure 104 : Warning on land, (2000, January 3), p. 1. [561] [Matelita Ragogo]

MP attacks State's ALTA plans

By MATELITA RAGOGO

Figure 105 : MP attacks State's ALTA plans, (2000, January 12), p. 2. [571] [Matelita Ragogo]

State, NLTB showdown looms

Figure 106 : State, NLTB showdown looms, (2000, February 16), p. 1. [611] [Margaret Wise]

\$4.5m or move

Villagers issue ultimatum

Figure 107 : \$4.5 m or move, (2000, March 28), p. 1. [676] [Margaret Wise]

Council knocks land concept

Reports by
MATELITA RAGOGO

Figure 108 : Council knocks land concept, (2000, March 30), p. 3. [684] [Matelita Ragogo]

Eviction time

Leave: NLTB tells State

Figure 109 : Eviction time. Leave: NLTB tells State, (2000, April 40, p. 1. [699] [NBL]

We'll seize land: NLTB

Figure 110 : We'll seize land, (2000, April 6), p. 1. [704][Jo Makaba]

10.3 Maika Qarikau, NLTB and agitation on Land



Figure 111 : Sacked director of the Fiji Development Bank, General Manager of NLTB, Maika Qarikau, (2000, March 4), p. 1 [635]

As has been discussed earlier, it was hasty and inexpedient of the government to remove Qarikau from the FDB where he was a director through convention, as the FDB dealt a great deal in matters relating to native land. Those who knew him, including this author, found him as a reasonable, friendly and a likeable person. His removal caused a great deal of bad blood between the government and the NLTB. Subsequent to his sacking, his objection and opposition to all government proposals on land solution escalated as shown in Figures 112 to 115:



Figure 112: What's for the landlord? (2000, April 10), p. 3. [719] [Margaret Wise]

NLTB general manager Maika Qarikau told delegates indigenous Fijians were eating the leftovers from the tables of farmers who benefited from their land. And unless indigenous Fijians re-evaluated their present situation their life of dependency would never stop.

Figure 113 : Ra Province rejects ALTA, (2000, April 14, p. 1. [732] [Matelita Ragogo]

Stand up, Qarikau urges Ra

By MATELITA RAGOGO

INDIGENOUS Fijians cannot allow themselves to be trampled on anymore.

And the attitude of accepting decisions without question must be removed.

Speaking in Fijian at the Ra Provincial Council meeting yesterday, NLTB general manager Maika Qarikau said indigenous Fijians must learn to question decisions made on their behalf.

Encouraging a spirit of more vigilance, Mr Qarikau said it was important that indigenous Fijians scrutinise every proposal placed before them.

"It is no use not to question, because when proposals are implemented, you realise there is nothing for you," Mr Qarikau said.

Figure 114 : Get up, stand up, Qarikau urges Ra, (2000, April 14), p. 1. [733] [Matelita Ragogo]

In this article below (Fig 115) which appeared without a byline, hints of personal animosity between Chaudhry and Qarikau is evident. What is unfortunate for the country is that a crucial matter of land had degenerated into an ego fight between two individuals - a politician and a technocrat and a Prime Minister and his public officer.



Figure 115 : Qarikau queries motives, (2000, April 8), p. 2. [715] [NBL]

Lal (2010) summed up this sentiment appropriately when he compared the leadership style of Reddy and Chaudhry in resolving the land issue, and cited Reddy's style of land issue resolution:

Reddy was 'reaching out to those who own land, and influencing the government.' 'Influencing people,' Reddy said, 'who are in a position to make the critical decisions that will resolve ALTA. I can't see how thumping the table and making all kinds of threats through the media can resolve the land problem.' (p. 686)

The relations between the Chaudhry government and the NLTB under Qarikau degenerated to such a low level that it defied logic and bordered on insubordination.

NLTB falls under the responsibility of the Minister of Fijian Affairs who reports to the Prime Minister. NLTB is a statutory organisation and its employees, especially the senior ones are deemed to be public office holders. When such officers show direct disregard for the government without any sanctions, then the Westminster style of democracy we speak of would appear to be in danger. This is what NLTB's Manager in Labasa, E. V. Toga had to say about the land dispute between the government and the landowners in Nausori, through LTE (Fig 116). While Toga was based in Labasa, he was raising an issue outside his jurisdiction:

The native landowners are denied what they rightly deserve. If they do protest or close a police headquarter and a high school, their action is not illegal.

It is Government that is now illegally occupying their land. Government has to either pay up or get out.

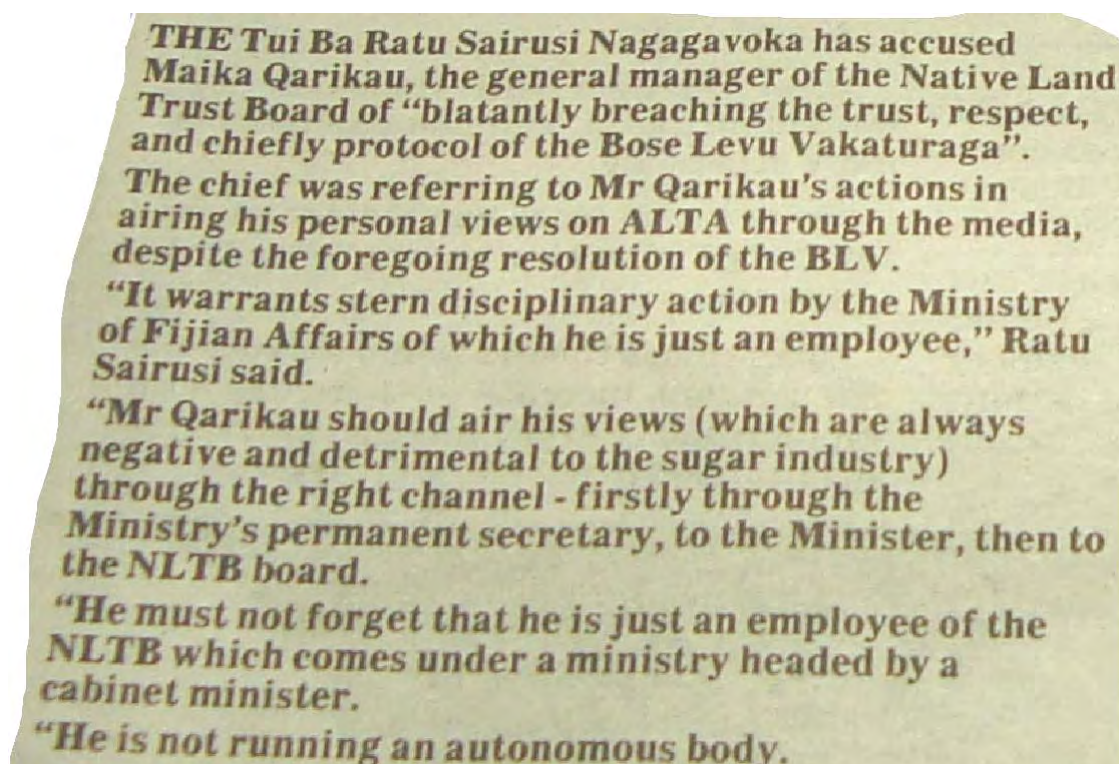
If Government's reaction in this particular case is an indication of how it will handle native landowners issues, then all native landowners of this country together with their trustee (NLTB) should stand united to fight back.

E V TOGA
Labasa.

Figure 116 : Toga, Emosi, Landowners' rights, LTE, (1999, July 10), p. 6. [1053]

The propriety or otherwise of the issue was not raised by anybody, not even the media. Never once did FT or any other organisation or institution raise any concern that was evident to a layman chief. This matter hits at the heart of the responsibilities and accountabilities of public officers and the employees of government owned organisations. What is a matter of greater significance is that while FT had very sharp and sensitive radar to detect the faults and shortcomings of the government, it failed to see what was seen by this chief. Qarikau was a part of the government machinery indirectly, and was not running an autonomous body. One wonders why the FT's

editorial writer, Netani Rika and reporter Margaret Wise, failed to notice what this Ba chief did (Fig 117):



THE Tui Ba Ratu Sairusi Nagagavoka has accused Maika Qarikau, the general manager of the Native Land Trust Board of “blatantly breaching the trust, respect, and chiefly protocol of the Bose Levu Vakaturaga”.
The chief was referring to Mr Qarikau's actions in airing his personal views on ALTA through the media, despite the foregoing resolution of the BLV.
“It warrants stern disciplinary action by the Ministry of Fijian Affairs of which he is just an employee,” Ratu Sairusi said.
“Mr Qarikau should air his views (which are always negative and detrimental to the sugar industry) through the right channel - firstly through the Ministry's permanent secretary, to the Minister, then to the NLTB board.
“He must not forget that he is just an employee of the NLTB which comes under a ministry headed by a cabinet minister.
“He is not running an autonomous body.

Figure 117 : Ba chief calls for Qarikau to quit, (1999, November 130, p. 3. [470][Matelita Ragogo]

10.4 Problems at successive Provincial Council meetings

The discord with the NLTB and Maika Qarikau weakened the government's ability to work amicably with Fijian institutions. This only aggravated the land issue or possible solutions to tackle the issue (Fig 120 and 121). Successive provincial council meetings had been turned into Indian-hate forums by Maika Qarikau who reminded landowners how Indians benefited out of the land while Fijians remained poorer (Fig 118). The misconception of the Fijian victim and the Indian beneficiary was swallowed by FT without any question, analysis or in-depth media scrutiny on a very contentious issue. All such coverage was provided by the Fijian reporters of FT and Margaret Wise featured in most of the articles (Figures 118 and 119).



What's for the landlord?
By MARGARET WISE

Figure 118 :What's for the landlord?, (2000, April 10), p. 3. [719] [Margaret Wise]



Figure 119: ALTA needs to go, first, (2000, April 19), p. 3 [743] [Margaret Wise]

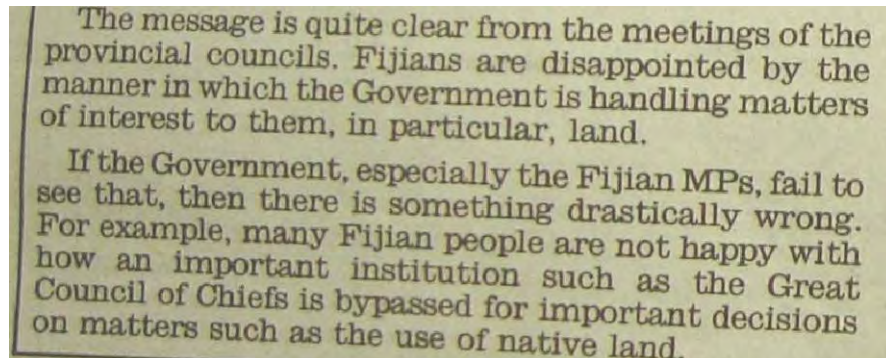


Figure 120 : An unhappy Fijian lot: Editorial, (2000, April 22), p. 6. [753]

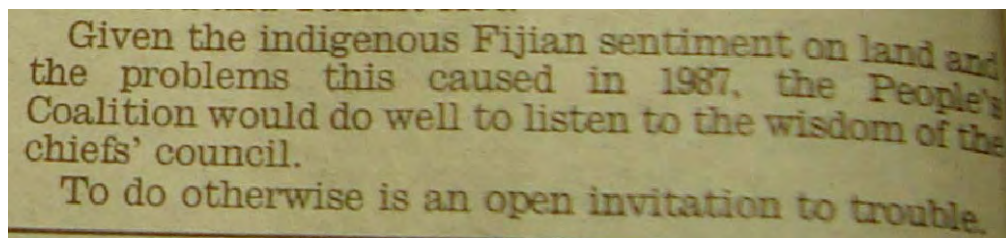
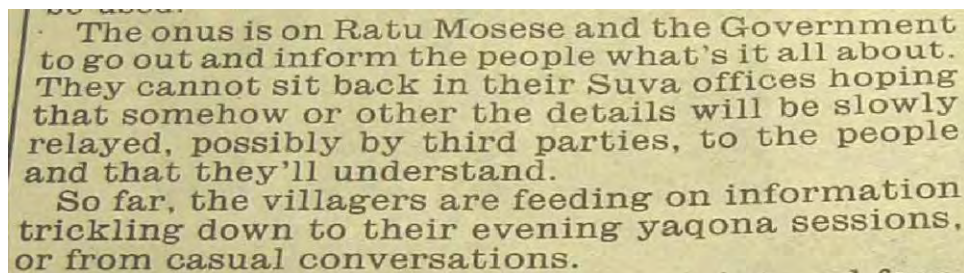


Figure 121 : Respect the chiefs' views: Editorial, (1999, November 26), p. 6. [478]

10.5 The Land Use Commission (LUC)

The LUC was a constructive effort from the government to uplift the wellbeing of the Fijian people, but there appeared to be a lack of media strategy in proper publicity and rational analysis of this crucial matter.

What should have been done?



The benefits of LUC that was not explained:

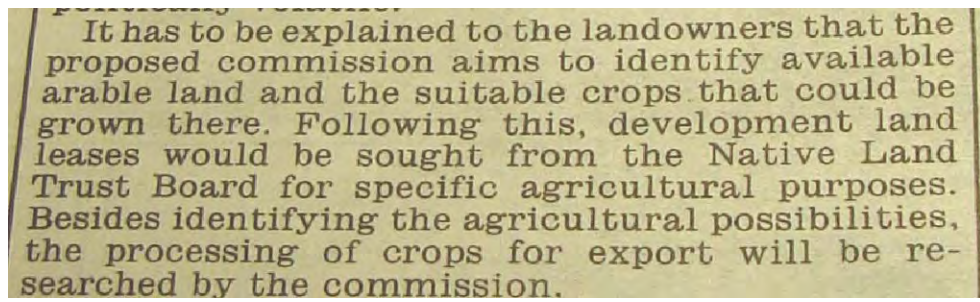


Figure 122 : The right to be informed: Editorial, (1999, November 28) p. 10. [484]

As has been pointed out in the literature review section, there were few articles that fell into the analytical and educational category. While recommending government to advice people on LUC, FT failed to take an opportunity to walk its talk, inform people what may have been its duty of care in properly educating the public on the benefits of this scheme and clarifying politically-motivated misinformation and misconceptions. There appeared to be little ability among the reporters and journalists who have been later named, to do any in-depth analytical and educational articles. This is evident from the fact that none were published to reveal their skill in this area, assuming they had it. Most of them appeared to be copy journalists, mouthing what others with a vested interest said without question or critique. Two reasons for this are provided by Robie (2004, p. 217), Devi and Chand (2008, p. 268), and Robertson and Sutherland (2001, p. 7): Fiji media being staffed by mostly inexperienced and young reporters and the lack of tertiary-qualified reporters with proper training by qualified professionals. This is depicted in Table 1 in Chapter 2.

Chapter 11: Rajendra Chaudhry

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Rajendra Chaudhry	18	0	0	11	61.1	7	38.9

Table 8: Rajendra Chaudhry, May 1999 to May 2000.

While the total number of items of news and articles covered will be relatively fewer from now on, they nevertheless are important features of the MPC government. This is one such issue. As has already been covered in the literature review, this appointment of his son, within a month of coming to office, was seen as one of the early stumbling blocks of MPC, and brings into question his astuteness as a politician (Fig 123). This was unnecessary and provided a great deal of fodder for his political opponents. Media had a field day in this issue which was repeated on occasions. All the 18 items featuring under this (Table 8) projected the government in a negative note, reflected poorly on the leadership of MPC and brought into question his reputation of being a sharp and smart politician. This all happened within the first few weeks of the new government.

Robie (2001b) had alluded to the fact that Chaudhry's problem was that he surrounded himself with well-trusted lightweights close to him who did little to spruce up, support and energise his team of rookie ministers and technocrats. He attributes MPC's public relations disaster to Vayeshnoi, who was seen to be ill-qualified for this crucial information portfolio (p. 8). Robertson and Sutherland (2001) added that the appointment of his equally abrasive son Rajendra Chaudhry as his personal secretary and head of the Cabinet office was another disaster: "Neither appointee had the skills and the temperament to woo the media, and both became the subject of controversy themselves" (p. 8).

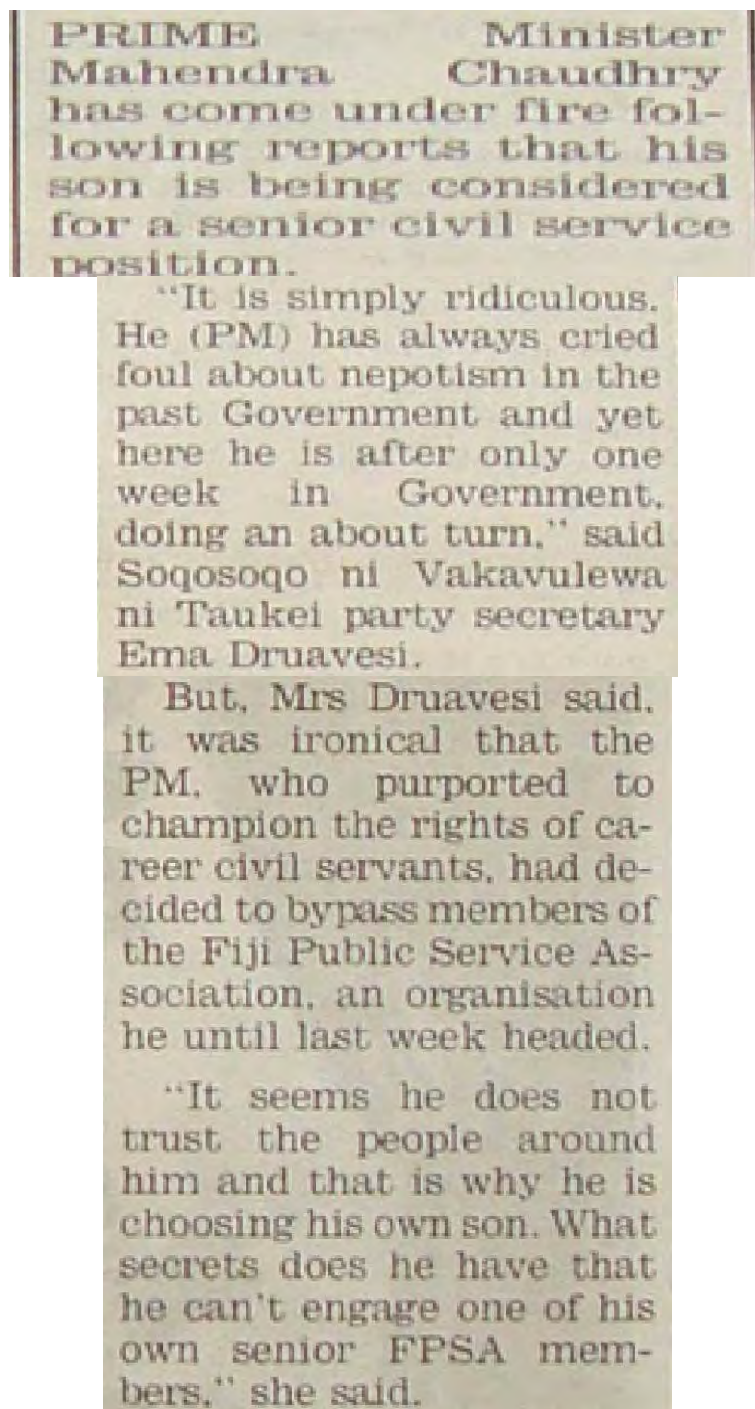


Figure 123 : PSC eyes Chaudhry's son for top job, (1999, June 3), p. 3. [972] [Irene Manueli]

Apart from the SVT party, FT also joined in, with a positive editorial warning MPC of this decision about his son (Fig 124). Letters to the editor also ridiculed this decision (Fig 125) in addition to a satirical article by Netani Rika (Fig 126):

THE move by the Prime Minister to have his son appointed as his private secretary is misguided for a range of reasons.

The suitability and qualifications of Rajendra Chaudhry for the \$35,000-plus post are not in doubt.

The accuracy or otherwise of these accusations is not an issue here.

The issue is the public perception of the Government and the message this appointment will send to the community.

It's not too late to rescind it.

The Prime Minister should think again.

Figure 124: Out with nepotism, Editorial, (1999, June 5), p. 6. [977]

Chaudhry & Chaudhry

THAT's how the Prime Minister's office should be listed in the next telephone directory if his son becomes his private secretary.

Just like any family law or an accounting firm for that's what the nation is getting. A father and son combination.

Figure 125: Waqa, Nacanieli, Chaudhry & Chaudhry, LTE, (1999, June 8), p. 6. [981]



Figure 126 : Photo: Chip off the old block... Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and his son Rajendra outside parliament, (1999, June 18), p. 3. [999] [Lepani Launumatua]

This episode was well summed up by Netani Rika in his satirical column "On the bright Side" (Fig 127):

The newest family business, of course, is the one at Government Buildings.

One of these days you'll probably see a huge sign go up along Gladstone Road.

Chaudhry & Son —
Prime Ministers and Private Secretaries. Established 1999.

Figure 127: Netani Rika, Keep it in the family: On the Bright Side, (1999, June 19), p. 7. [1007]

Chapter 12: The Tea Lady Affair

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
The Tea Lady Affair	21	0	0	21	100	0	0

Table 9: The Tea Lady Affair, May 1999 to May 2000.

The so called “Tea Lady” affair was another case of a great deal of storm brewing in a tea cup. Of the 21 stories covered (Table 9), all projected negatively. The role, balance, responsibility, ethics and the neutrality of a free press also came under the spotlight in regard to news coverage of this topic. The coverage also raises questions about the consistency and the balance of chiefs, the church, other Fijian politicians and their flexible and expedient sense of morality. What also stands out clearly in the reporting of this issue is that those wishing to raise and repeat this subject in FT newsroom did not wish to be identified, as none of the news stories on this subject in our sample carried a byline.

This is what the PM’s tea lady, Torika Uluiviti is alleged to have seen (Fig 128):

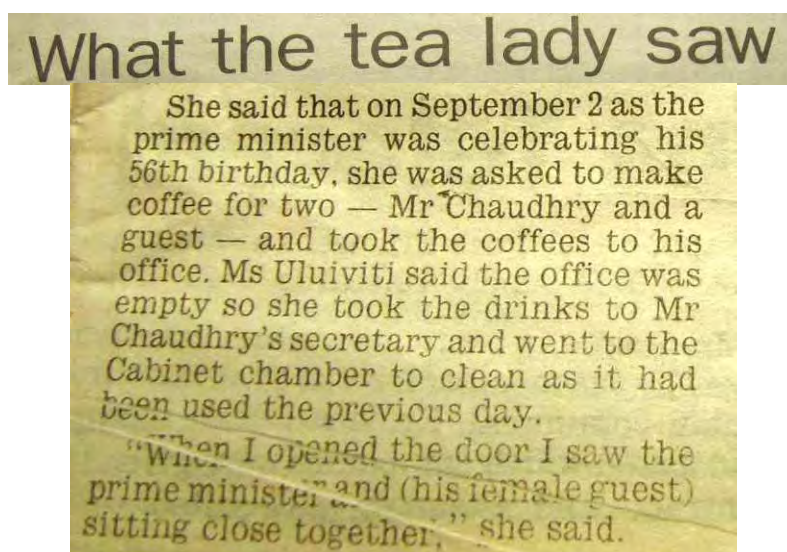


Figure 128 : What the tea lady saw, (1999, December 2), p. 3. [492][NBL]

In this story what the tea lady saw was merely a female guest, later named as AFP correspondent (former FT journalist and a long term friend of MPC) Asha Lakhan.

This is how the media headlines sensationalised this story as illustrated in Figures 129 to 140:



Figure 129 : Storm brews over tea girl, (1999, November 26), p. 1 [475] [NBL]

Chaudhry admits ordering transfer

Figure 130 ; Chaudhry admits ordering transfer, (1999, November 27), p. 3. [480] [NBL]

Tea lady
says she
will not
stir

Figure 131 : Tea lady says she will not stir, (1999, November 28), p. 3. [482][NBL]

Union to discuss transfer

Figure 132 : Union to discuss transfer, (1999, November 30), p. 3. [487][NBL]

Tea cup storm brews

Figure 133 ; Tea cup storm brews: Editorial, (1999, November 30), p. 6. [488]

PM's tea cup storm subsides

Figure 134 : PM's tea cup storm subsides, (November 1), p. 3 [490] [NBL]

Story made up: Vayeshnoi

Figure 135: Story made up: Vayeshnoi, (1999, December 6), p. 5. [500][NBL]

Church
leader
warns
Chaudhry

Figure 136 : Church leader warns Chaudhry, (1999, December 3), p. 1. [493] [NBL]

Church calls for accountability

Figure 137 : Church calls for accountability, (1999, December 15), p. 3. [523][NBL]

**Congress
split on
tea lady**
THE Fiji Trades Union Congress was yesterday divided over its stand on Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry's involvement in the tea lady saga.

Figure 138 : Congress split on tea lady, (1999, December 3), p. 3. [494] [NBL]

**Please
explain
PM:
Church**

TWO religious organisations have joined the Methodist Church in calling on Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry to explain allegations that he ordered the transfer of a tea lady after being seen, by the tea lady, "sitting close" to a woman in the Cabinet chamber.

Figure 139 : Please explain PM: Church, (1999, December 4), p. 3. [495][NBL]



Centre of the storm . . . tea lady Torika Uluiviti

Figure 140 : Photo: Centre of the storm... tea lady Torika Uluiviti, (1999, November 30) p. 1[486] [Asaeli Lave]

The story brewed so much of an aroma that even the editorial of FT got involved in the transfer of an unestablished government employee when much important issues fail to see the light of the day in this section. The paper hinted at a conspiracy:

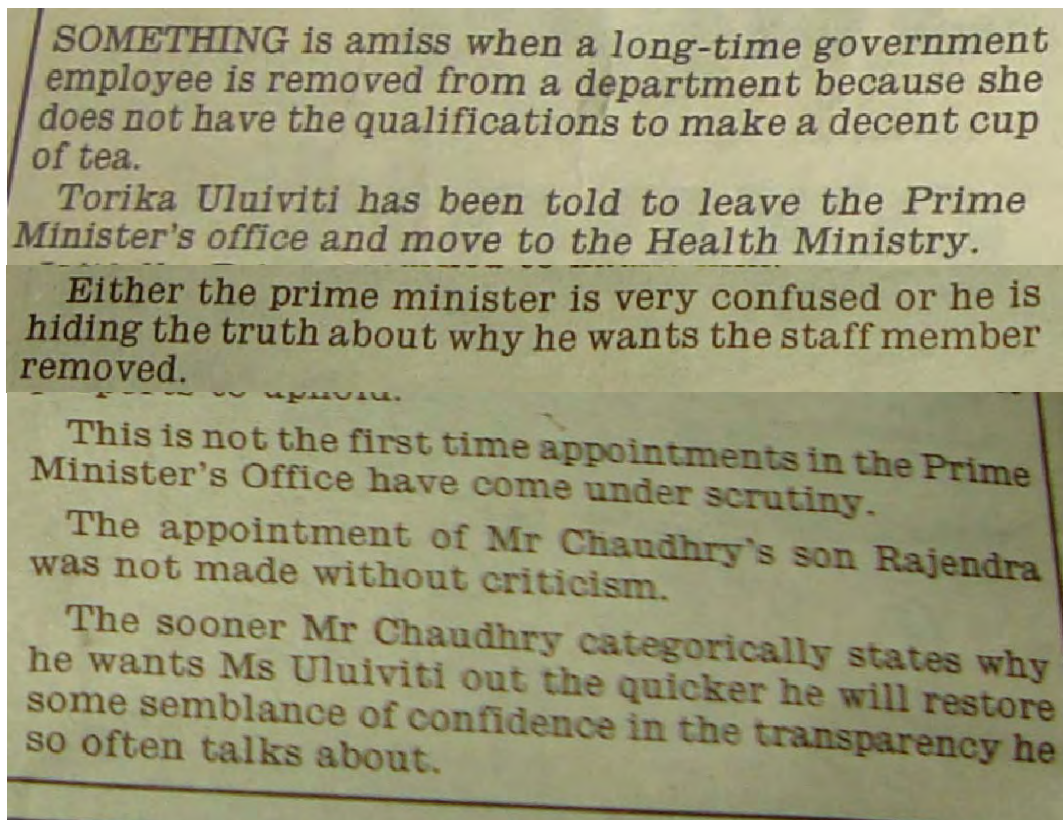


Figure 141 : Tea cup storm brews: Editorial, (1999, November 30), p. 6. [488]

This matter became more intriguing when the tea lady took out a three quarter page advertisement in FT (Fig 142) to tell her side of the story on 4 December 1999. But this story had already run in FT on 2 December (Fig 128). The advertisement was very professionally done and it was evident that she was not only assisted in drafting the advertisement but financially assisted as well.

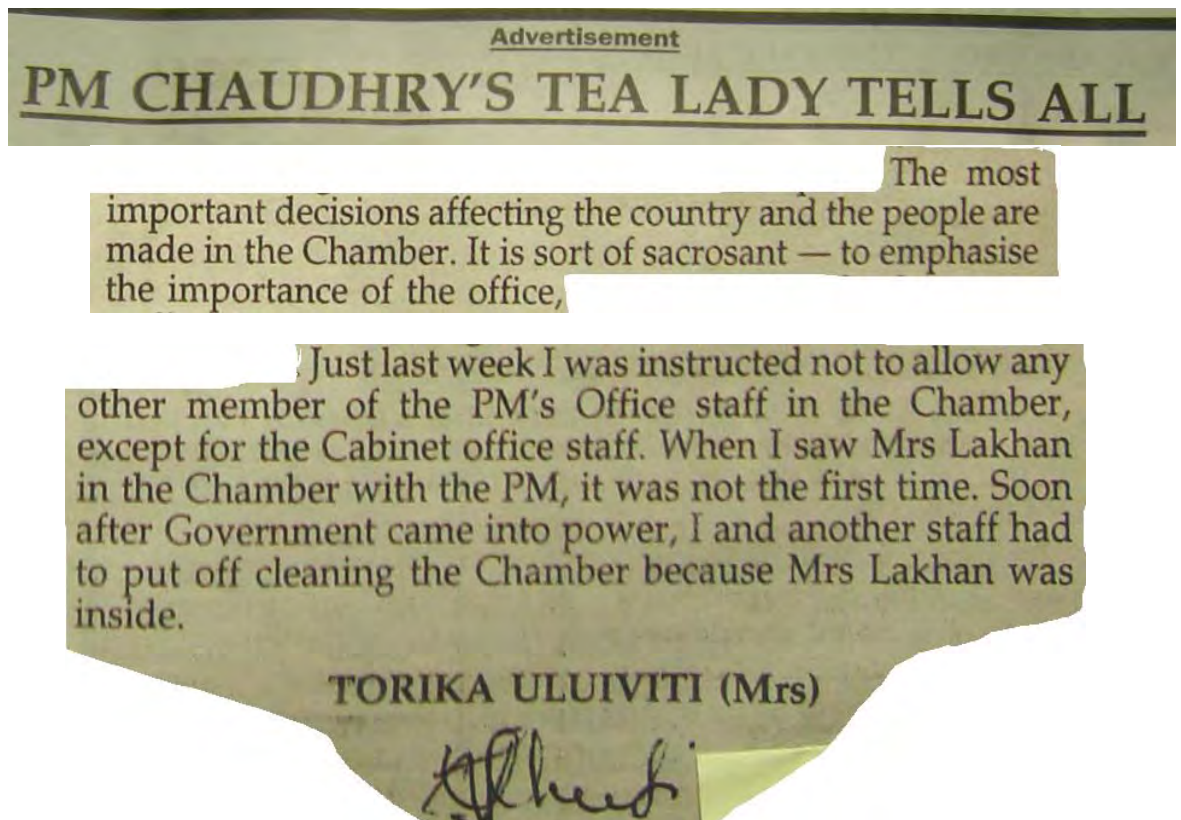


Figure 142 : Advertisement: PM Chaudhry's Tea Lady tells all, (1999, November 4), p. 23. [506]

The issue on the level of language used and the ability of a lowly paid employee being able to afford such an expensive advertisement was raised by Rajendra Chaudhry through a letter to the editor (Fig 143). The pertinent issues raised goes to another level of conspiracy theory:

In fact, so much attention was given (to the tea lady story) that basic principles of rationality and accuracy were ignored in the pursuit by the media of a sensational story to undermine the prime minister.

However, I am rather curious on two issues. The first is on a three-quarter page advertisement in *The Fiji Times* which was taken out at a cost of \$985.00. With so much loose change (equivalent to 8.7 weeks of nett wages for a tea lady) to fork out on advertisements the tea lady really has no reason to work.

Secondly, with such a good command of English, as per her advertisement, I think that the tea lady has been underutilised. She can do much better than being a tea lady judging by the high calibre of English, as per her paid advertisement, and perhaps ought to apply for a job which reflects her true ability ... such as a news reporter.

R.P CHAUDHRY

Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister

Figure 143: Chaudhry, Rajendra Pal: Tea lady saga: LTE, (1999, December 10), p. 6. [508]

Questions that go begging are: who was behind the professional drafting of the advertisement? Who paid for the almost \$1,000 bill for the advertisement? Were there any political forces behind this strategy to discredit the government? Was she used as a political pawn by those opposing the new government?

From media perspectives, the interesting point is that most articles appeared on either page 1 or page 3 for maximum exposure and as already stated, none of them had a byline, so we are unaware who the authors of the tea lady saga stories were.

Robie (2000c) cites Michael Field who suspected the tea lady saga was a set up job but the media went for the ride. Field stated that he had suspicion about this issue, as something was amiss but the media failed to follow it up (p. 7).

Chapter 13: Dr Tupeni Baba and Chaudhry tension

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Baba & Chaudhry tension	19	1	5.2	17	89.5	1	5.3

Table 10: Tension between Dr Tupeni Baba and Mahendra Chaudhry, May 1999 to May 2000.

This is an interesting issue which shows two things. First, there is another way to run a government, in an open and a more transparent style. Second, media can have a field day when what they wish to hear is said by a politician. In this instance, MPC with a big entourage was on a trip to China and in two weeks between December 14 to 28, there was wide coverage of what Dr Tupeni Baba, as Acting Prime Minister is “alleged” to have said in his absence. The term “alleged” is used, because when MPC returned, Dr Baba backtracked and said his statements were misinterpreted by the media. Dr Baba’s action also gave credence to the idiom: when the cat is away, the mice will play. Of the 19 stories reported (Table 10), all except one reflected badly on the People’s Coalition government, in particular its leadership.

The story was initiated by Margaret Wise, where Dr Baba is reported as questioning MPC on his actions and the type of governance and methods in running the government. The matter of intrigue is what Baba should have raised in the caucus with the coalition partners in confidence were spilled in the public when Chaudhry was conveniently away. This was a case of a government minister hanging his dirty linen in public. The reports started as such (Fig 144):

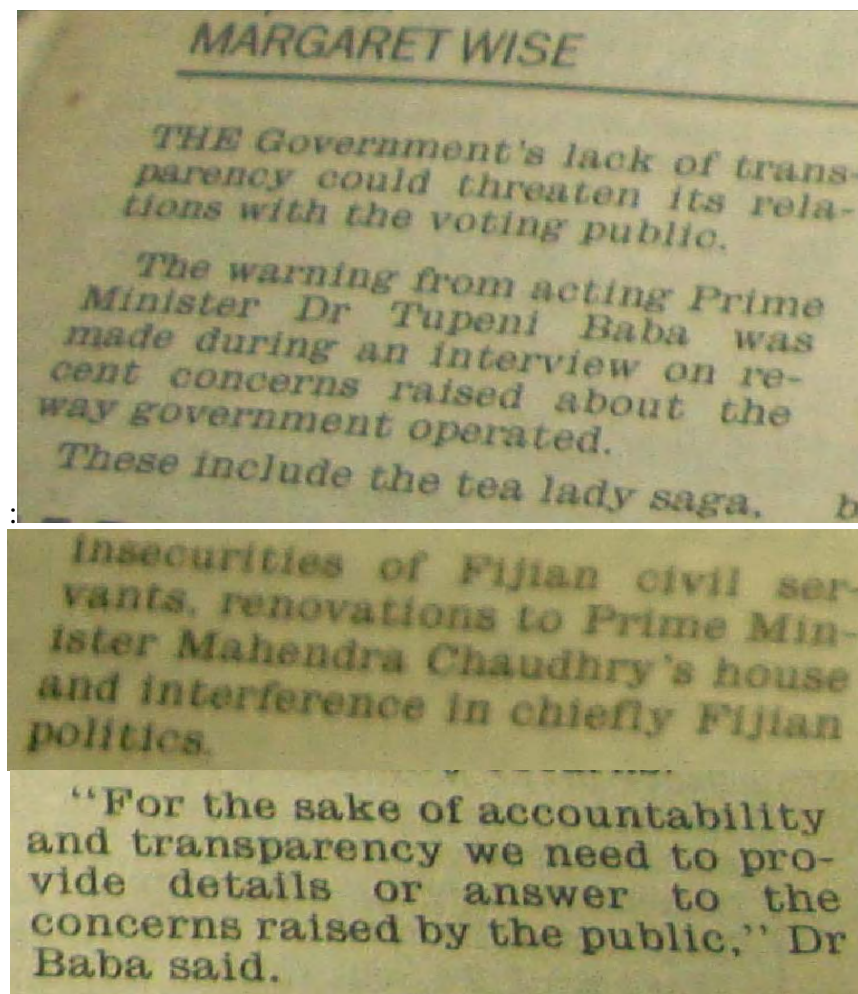


Figure 144 : Baba states his case, (1999, December 20), p. 3. [534] [Margaret Wise]

Dr Baba's statements during the interview with Margaret Wise were summed up as follows (Fig 145):

- Admitted government's non-transparency;
- Admitted there was an "air of suspiciousness" in the Civil Service, referring to concerns raised by some senior indigenous civil servants;
- Admitted unsigned letters on private lives of journalists, politicians and other prominent people began after gutter-level contribution by some members of the Lower House;
- Admitted the prime minister may have blown his travel budget; and
- Admitted Mr Chaudhry needed to answer questions that has been raised after allegations of an extra-marital affair was made against him by his former tea lady.

Figure 145: Opposition heaps praise on Baba, (1999, December 21), p. 3. [538] [Matelita Ragogo]

What is a matter of interest is that in 19 stories covered in the analysis under this subject, more than half of them (10) had repeated the above bullet-pointed issues. This was also repeated in the editorial of FT (Fig 146) which heaped praises on Dr Baba for his forthrightness and leadership style.

CABINET reeled yesterday when acting Prime Minister Dr Tupeni Baba spoke out against Mahendra Chaudhry.

It is unlikely that any member of the People's Coalition caucus — let alone Cabinet — would dare raise the issues Dr Baba raised.

The former university academic criticised his own government for its lack of transparency, being insensitive to indigenous Fijian needs and issues, worsening the racial divide in the Civil Service and the poor quality of the coalition's backbenchers.

And he called on Mr Chaudhry to speak openly about what has become the Tea Lady Controversy.

Last week Dr Baba promised transparency for as long as he was in charge of the nation.

Figure 146: Baba, man of the hour: Editorial, [1999, December 21), p. 6. [541]

What FT failed to ask or inform is why Dr Baba raised these issues in the absence of MPC? Where was his courage which FT was praising, when MPC was around and why were they not raised to Chaudhry's face? While it was appreciated that the issues Dr Baba raised were noteworthy and reflected well on the new trend of transparent leadership that the new government should preferably follow, the manner in which they have been raised, continuously repeated and promoted by FT, supported by the Opposition, raises some moral and ethical media issues.

Nevertheless, Dr Baba's more acceptable, though brief leadership opportunity emphasised and amplified Chaudhry's poor leadership style that had been raised by many, both inside and outside the government. This issue was highlighted by the Deputy Leader of Opposition, David Pickering in a letter to the editor (Fig 127):

Resign PM

On every occasion that Professor Baba took over the reign of the Government as Acting Prime Minister, it has been like a breath of fresh air.

Dr Baba's sane, logical and balanced style of leadership has, in fact, exposed more of the inherent deficiencies in Chaudhry's dictatorial style.

I can sympathise with Dr Baba and his Fijian colleagues who have attempted to defend Chaudhry on so many occasions when they must have questioned the logic

Why are we letting our country suffer the perils of racial confrontation?
The grievances expressed by those dissatisfied with the Government, all relate to Chaudhry and his style of leadership.
The remedy must be obvious — replace Chaudhry with his deputy and do the whole country a favour.
DAVID PICKERING
Deputy Leader
of the Opposition.

Figure 147 : Pickering, David, Deputy Leader of Opposition, Resign PM, LTE, (2000, April 4), p. 6. [786]

Such open challenge to the leadership of MPC from a credible source did not do much to instil confidence in Chaudhry's leadership style which had been a matter of concern for many from day one. Hence he could not entirely blame FT or the media in general for his predicament.

Chapter 14: Clark-Hunter work permits

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Clark-Hunter work permits	26	2	7.7	7	26.9	17	65.4

Table 11: Clark - Hunter work permits issue, May 1999 to May 2000.

This issue of work permits for Fiji Television general manager Kenneth Clark and Fiji Times' editor-in- chief Russell Hunter was another blunder by the new government at the early stage of their term. Despite all the advice, they decided to change the established protocols, customs and practice, and were very hasty in bringing in changes that went wrong. The impact of these hasty and perhaps foolhardy decisions was more pronounced because the actions were against the executives of two leading news media groups: *The Fiji Times* and *Fiji Television*. The analysis shows that even in this simple administrative matter, the government attracted negative publicity because of its earlier tussles and tensions with the media. The following headlines (Figures 148 and 149) hurt its relations with the media:

A photograph of a newspaper clipping with the headline "State orders TV boss to leave" in large, bold, black letters on a light-colored background.

Figure 148 : State orders TV boss to leave, (1999, July 17), p. 1 [313] [Verenaisi Raicola]

A photograph of a newspaper clipping with the headline "Minister refuses Hunter permit" in large, bold, black letters on a light-colored background.

Figure 149 : Minister refuses Hunter permit, (1999, December 31), p. 3. [555][NBL]

14.1 Fiji TV CEO Ken Clark

Kenneth Clark was advised by the new government to leave as it was not going to renew his work permit because of a “breach” in the condition. MPC got involved in this case from the early stage instead of his line ministers. Fiji Television sought direction from the courts, which ruled in favour of Clark, citing procedural errors and oversight

on the part of the government. This attracted comments and advice to the government to change its style of management.



Figure 150 : Photo: Kenneth Clark, Chief Executive of Fiji TV, (1999, July 17), p. 1 [313]

FT editorial was critical of government's action (Fig 151). The editorial hit at the inexperience in the government which tended to take actions in a hurry without looking at all the implications.

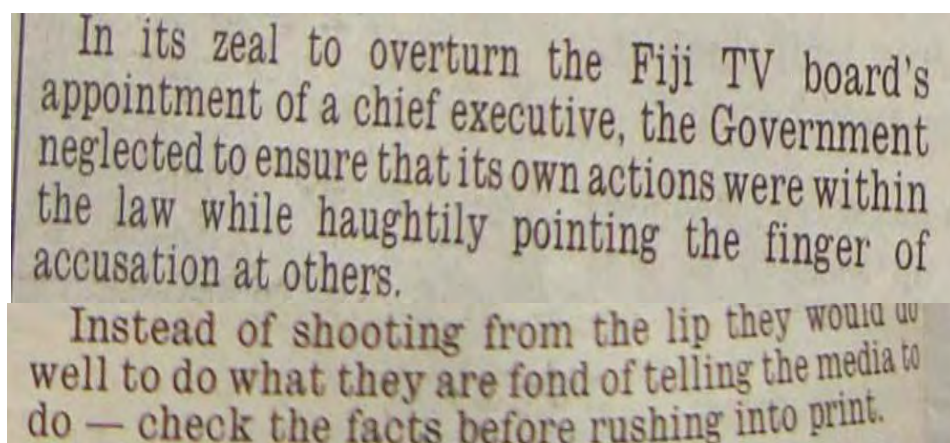
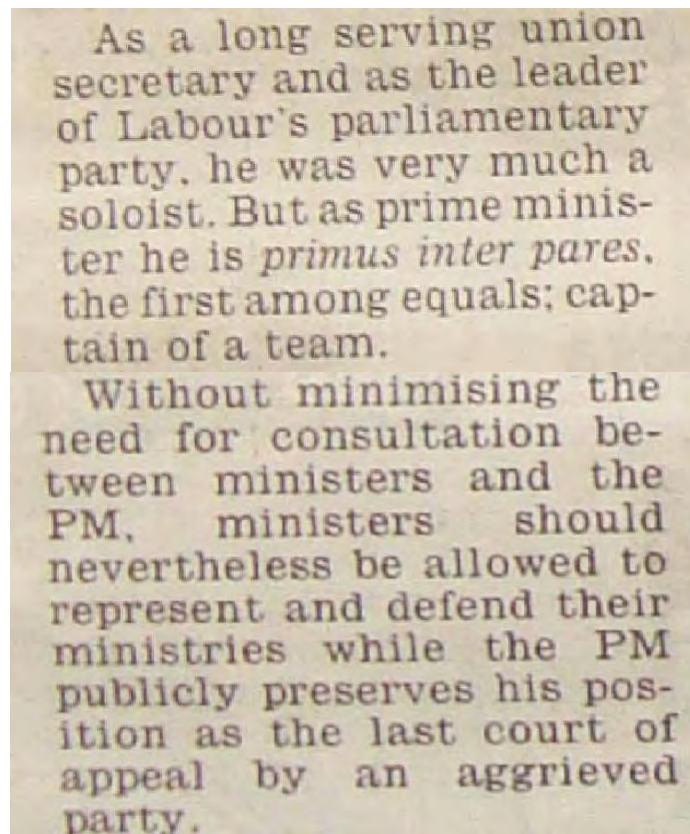


Figure 151 : Get it right: Editorial, (1999, July 24), p. 6. [1061]

Sir Vijay Singh, former Attorney-General in Ratu Mara's government, a qualified lawyer and a regular columnist of FT (now deceased), offered a good observation and advice to MPC to allow more rope and discretion for his Ministers (Fig 152).



As a long serving union secretary and as the leader of Labour's parliamentary party, he was very much a soloist. But as prime minister he is *primus inter pares*, the first among equals; captain of a team.

Without minimising the need for consultation between ministers and the PM, ministers should nevertheless be allowed to represent and defend their ministries while the PM publicly preserves his position as the last court of appeal by an aggrieved party.

Figure 152 : Sir Vijay Singh: It's the worst of times: Opinion, (1999, July 28), p. 7. [1063]

Netani Rika, in his satirical opinion column, *On the Bright Side*, repeated criticism of this lack of coordination between government Ministers and ministries. He advised MPC to “grow up” from being a trade union leader into the leader of a country.

And the Government gets its butt whipped in court for failing to follow the correct procedure in rejecting work permits.

Was the attorney-general ever consulted in all of this?

If he was consulted, does the court ruling mean he doesn't know his job?

And if he wasn't consulted, why not?

Mahen, you're a big boy now playing in the big league.

Just remember you're running a government.

Not a trade union.

Figure 153 : Netani Rika, *When the going gets tough: On the Bright Side*, (1999, July 24), p. 7. [1062]

14.2 Editor-in-Chief of *The Fiji Times*, Russell Hunter

The government rejected the extension of the work permit of the editor-in- chief of FT, Russell Hunter in November 1999. FT challenged this in the courts which ruled that the government retained the discretion to extend a work permit. It did not dwell on the propriety or otherwise of the government policy. As a result of the court decision, the government directed Hunter to leave Fiji by 3 May 2000. The ground for the government's non-renewal was that it wished expatriate positions to be localised.

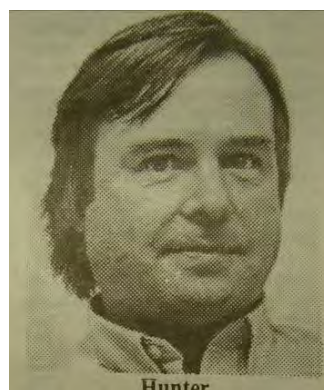
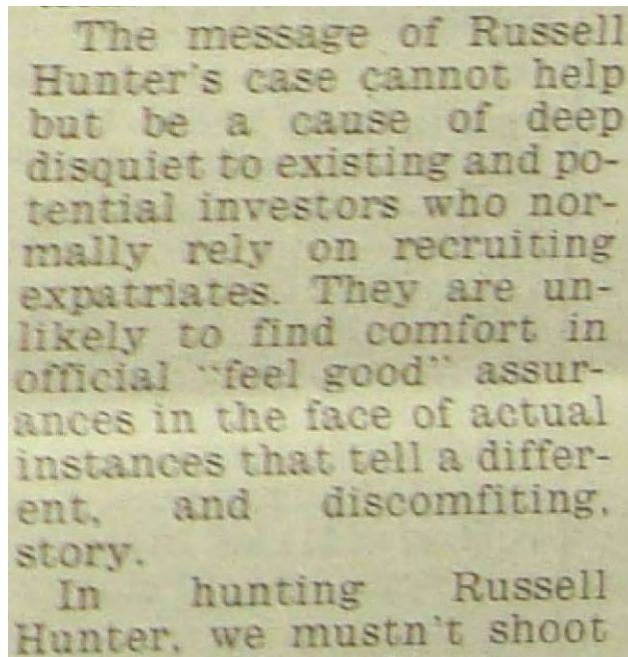


Figure 154 : Photo: Editor-in-Chief of *The Fiji Times*, Russell Hunter, (2000, April 27), p. 5. [758]

As Sir Vijay observed in his opinion column, despite this requirement, there still remained many expatriates in Fiji for so many years. What this meant was that either these regulations were regularly breached or they were selectively applied.



The message of Russell Hunter's case cannot help but be a cause of deep disquiet to existing and potential investors who normally rely on recruiting expatriates. They are unlikely to find comfort in official "feel good" assurances in the face of actual instances that tell a different, and discomfiting, story.

In hunting Russell Hunter, we mustn't shoot

Figure 155 : Sir Vijay Singh, We're shot in the foot: Opinion, (2000, May 2), p. 7. [779]

Earlier, we had discussed the inability of the new government to build a congenial working relationship with many stakeholders, including the chiefs, the landowners, civil servants and the NLTB. Added to this list has been the crucial partner - the media, which was fairly receptive when the new government came to power. The unnecessary imposition of regulations hardened the feelings and this was very unproductive, in fact damaging. As Robie (2001b) had observed, the lack of a media policy contributed to the woes of the new government (p. 8). In addition, its strained relations brought about by the Hunter - Clark work permit controversies did not help in winning new friends in the newsrooms.

Chapter 15: The Constitutional Amendments

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Constitutional amendments	11	0	0	7	63.6	4	36.4

Table 12: The Constitutional Amendments, May 1999 to May 2000.

This issue of constitutional amendment was yet another example of the folly of the People's Coalition government. Of all the eleven stories covered in this issue (Table 12), almost two-thirds were unfavourable and none was positive. What is ironical is that the Fiji Labour Party was initially not in complete agreement with the 1997 Constitution, and had some reservations about it, especially on the number of reserved communal seats for the Indo-Fijians. But no sooner had MPC gained the power through the same Constitution, than he decided to tinker with it.

This fanned suspicions of some Fijian people in general and the landowners in particular, towards the Chaudhry government. The Fijians viewed this constitutional amendment which was deemed to dilute the powers of the President and make him a servant of the Cabinet as an act of betrayal by MPC. Their perception, through the portrayal by the media, was that Chaudhry, an "Indian," was the Cabinet.

Sir Vijay explained why nobody should interfere with a country's constitution (Fig 156), and despite his commendable mandate, MPC should have steered clear of it, especially so early in his term.

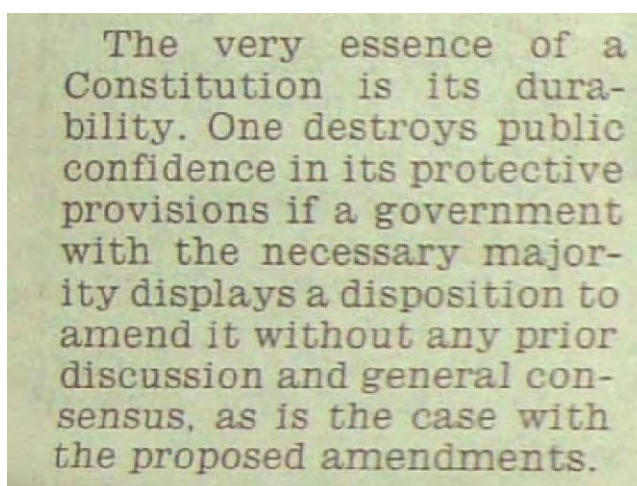
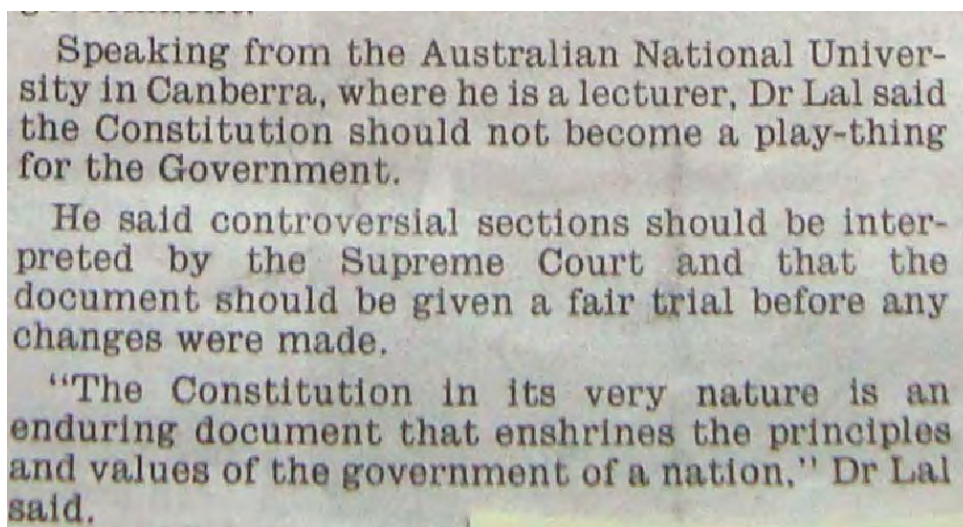


Figure 156 : Sir Vijay Singh, Vandalising the Constitution: Opinion, (2000, April 4), p. 7 [700]

One of the architects of the 1997 Constitution Dr Brij Lal also echoed this view and objected to any changes, no matter how small (Fig 157):



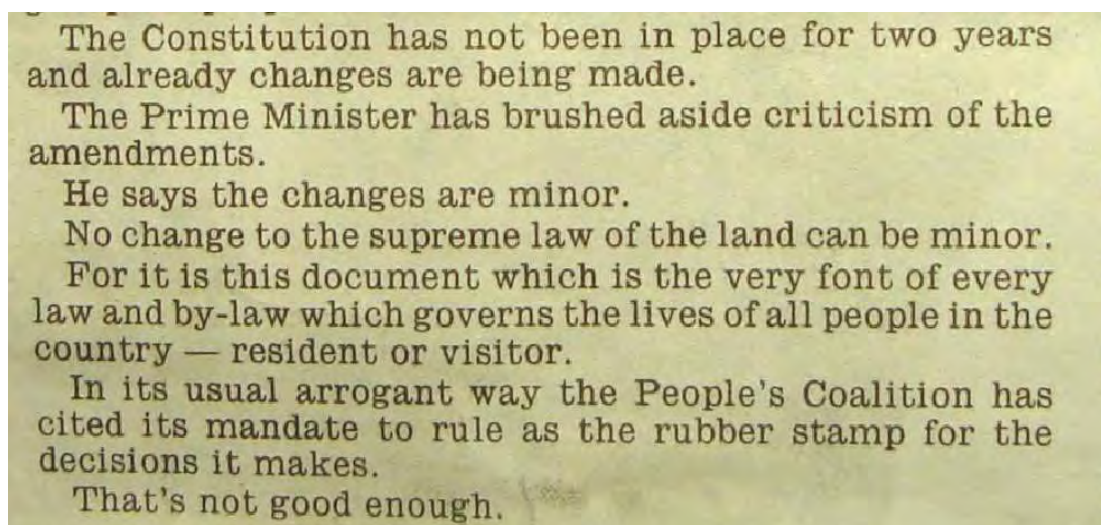
Speaking from the Australian National University in Canberra, where he is a lecturer, Dr Lal said the Constitution should not become a play-thing for the Government.

He said controversial sections should be interpreted by the Supreme Court and that the document should be given a fair trial before any changes were made.

"The Constitution in its very nature is an enduring document that enshrines the principles and values of the government of a nation," Dr Lal said.

Figure 157: Lal hits out at proposed changes, (2000, February 22), p. 3. [618] [NBL]

FT editorial on this issue was equally strong and raised serious objections to any changes (Fig 158):



The Constitution has not been in place for two years and already changes are being made.

The Prime Minister has brushed aside criticism of the amendments.

He says the changes are minor.

No change to the supreme law of the land can be minor.

For it is this document which is the very font of every law and by-law which governs the lives of all people in the country — resident or visitor.

In its usual arrogant way the People's Coalition has cited its mandate to rule as the rubber stamp for the decisions it makes.

That's not good enough.

Figure 158 : Open up, prime minister: Editorial, (2000, February 22), p. 6. [619]

This action caused ill-feeling among the indigenous people, as they saw the changes as an act on dishonesty on the part of the "Indian" government which might try to use its absolute majority to erode indigenous rights enshrined in the Constitution. This unwise move provided more fuel for racial agitation (Fig 159):

By MARGARET WISE

PRESIDENT Ratu Sir Kamisese has been advised that the Government's intention to seek amendments to the Constitution "borders on dishonesty".

Ratu Sir Kamisese was also told this was the first time changes affecting Fijian interests were being sought without the Great Council of Chiefs' approval.

In a 13-page briefing by the Native Land Trust Board, Ratu Sir Kamisese, who's also president of the board, was told the amendments affecting the powers of the President would limit his powers to act in the best interests of native Fijians.

**Figure 159 : Land board queries State's integrity, (2000, February 26), p. 3. [625]
[Margaret Wise]**

Chapter 16: Fiji Hardwood Corporation and Speight

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Fiji Hardwood & Speight	23	1	4.3	7	30.4	15	65.3

Table 13: Fiji Hardwood Corporation and Speight, May 1999 to May 2000.

This issue was specifically chosen to probe one of the alleged key reasons for the George Speight putsch - the mahogany deal. The data in Table 13 above shows that more information on this subject fell into “neutral” category, as FT, for a change, took greater opportunity in informing people about the mahogany issue.

George Speight was appointed to the Fiji Hardwood Corporation (FHC) by the Rabuka government. Isimeli Bose, the Minister for Public Enterprise, had appointed him as Chairman of FHC. The Rabuka government and George Speight favoured the Timber Resource Management Group (TRM). George Speight is also alleged to have received certain payments from TRM into his personal bank account (see below) and the SVT government was finalising the deal with TRM. Speight resigned from the FHC Board to stand as a dummy candidate for his father, former Rewa Dairy executive, Sam Speight in the 1999 General Election. George Speight was not sacked as Chairman by Chaudhry as has been alleged by some. In fact Speight was sacked as Chairman of the Fiji Pine Commission by Chaudhry Government’s Agricultural Minister, Poseci Bune. Through this action, Speight also lost Chairmanship of Tropic Wood Industries Limited in which Fiji Pine held shares.

Speight’s plan of going with TRM was derailed by the victory of the People’s Coalition Government which favoured the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC). This has been suggested as one of the main reasons for Speight’s action.

Because of the controversies involved here is discussion on the two alternatives:

16.1 The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC)

Sir Vijay, in his weekly opinion column in FT explained the difference between the two organisations (Fig 160):

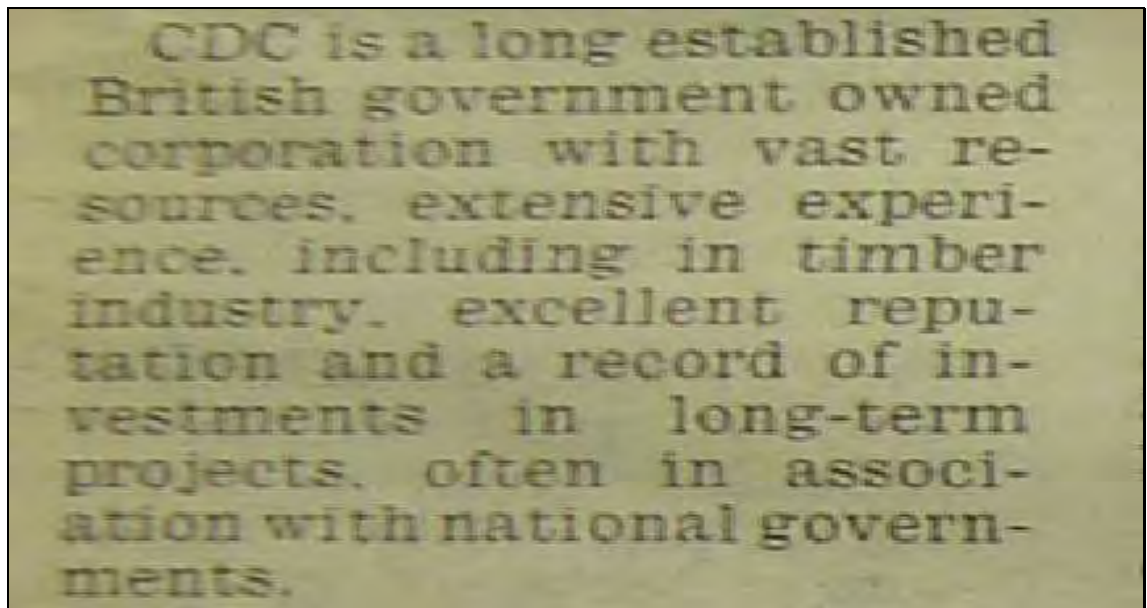


Figure 160 : Sir Vijay Singh, Soft money for hardwood: Opinion, (2000, March 28), p. 7. [679]

In a visit to Serua Province, Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry took an opportunity to explain the difference between the two companies and the reasons why they were backing CDC (Fig 161):

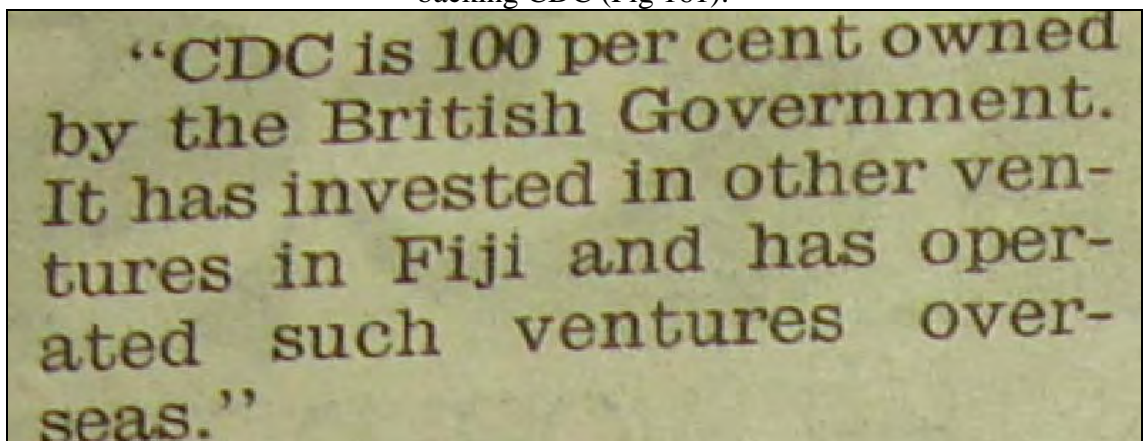
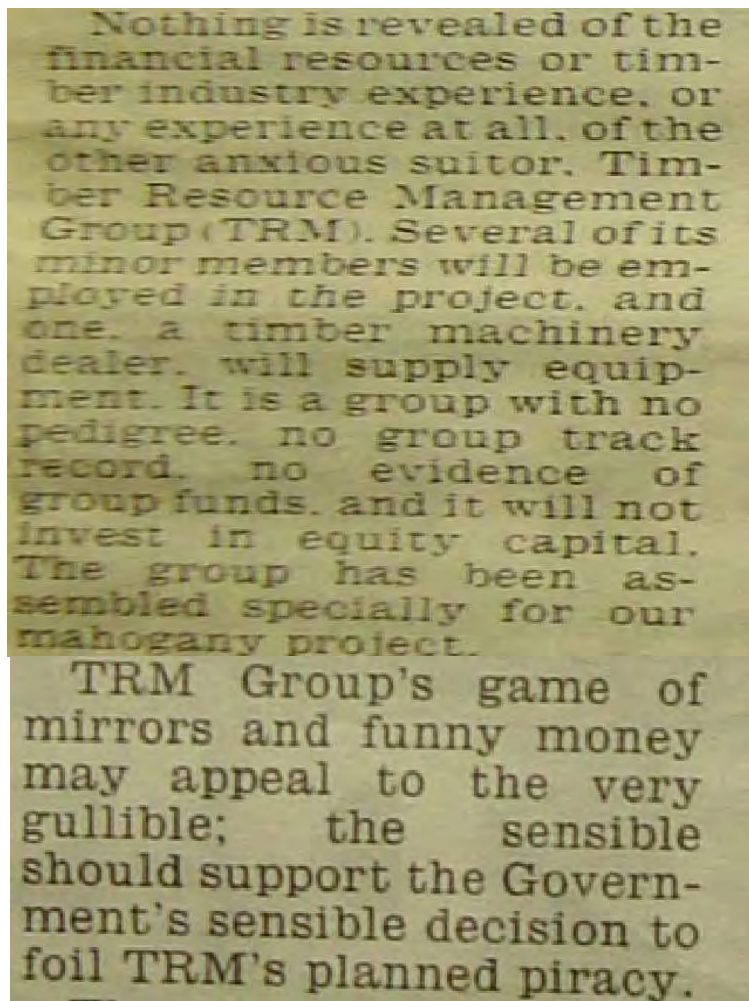


Figure 161: PM woos mahogany owners, (2000, March 30), p. 2. [683] [Matelita Ragogo]

16.2 The Timber Resource Management Group (TRM).

Sir Vijay goes to compare the organisation that Speight and Rabuka government had favoured (Fig: 162):

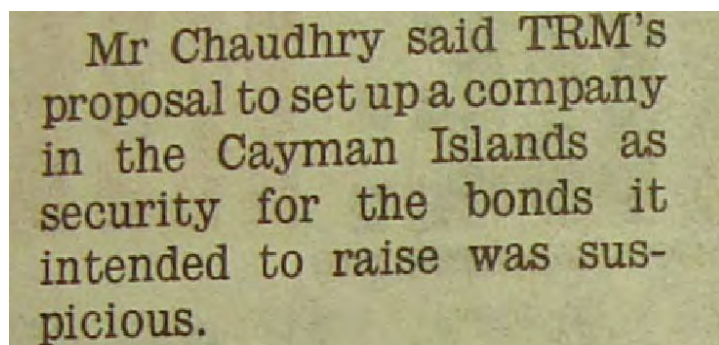


Nothing is revealed of the financial resources or timber industry experience, or any experience at all, of the other anxious suitor, Timber Resource Management Group (TRM). Several of its minor members will be employed in the project, and one, a timber machinery dealer, will supply equipment. It is a group with no pedigree, no group track record, no evidence of group funds, and it will not invest in equity capital. The group has been assembled specially for our mahogany project.

TRM Group's game of mirrors and funny money may appeal to the very gullible; the sensible should support the Government's sensible decision to foil TRM's planned piracy.

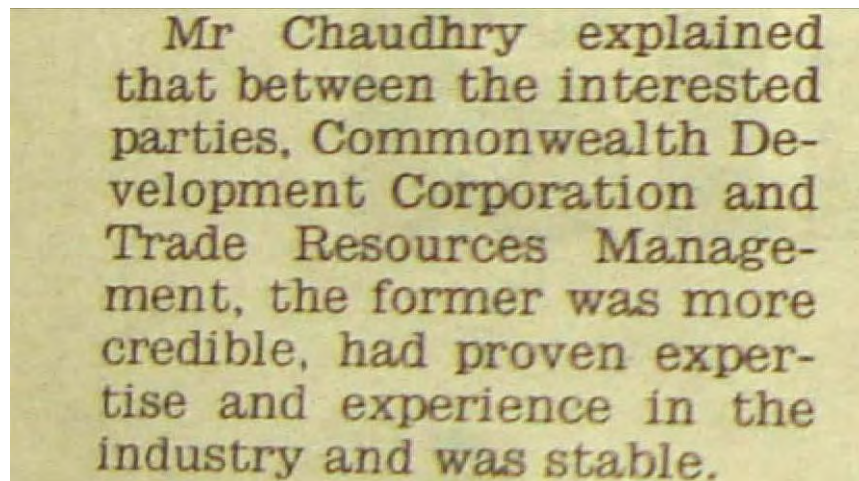
Figure 162 : Sir Vijay Singh, Soft money for hardwood: Opinion, (2000, March 28), p. 7. [679]

Chaudhry aired his misgivings about the company that Speight and SVT were favouring (Fig 163):



Mr Chaudhry said TRM's proposal to set up a company in the Cayman Islands as security for the bonds it intended to raise was suspicious.

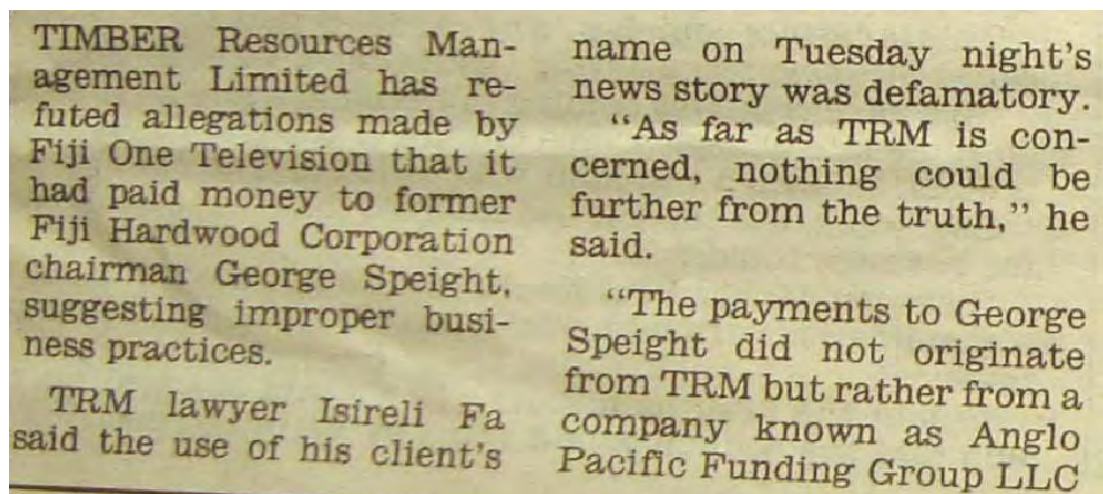
After revealing his doubts on the authenticity and credibility of TRM, Chaudhry told the representatives of Serua Province his government's reason for siding with CDC:



Mr Chaudhry explained that between the interested parties, Commonwealth Development Corporation and Trade Resources Management, the former was more credible, had proven expertise and experience in the industry and was stable.

Figure 163 : PM woos mahogany owners, (2000, March 30), p. 2. [683] [Matelita Ragogo]

The news story below adds perspective to the claimed motives of George Speight in wanting to oust Chaudhry. This is because Speight's alleged dealings and financial association with TRM was derailed, cut short and effectively "sabotaged" by the victory of the new government (Fig 164). Hence the motive for its removal.



TIMBER Resources Management Limited has refuted allegations made by Fiji One Television that it had paid money to former Fiji Hardwood Corporation chairman George Speight, suggesting improper business practices.

TRM lawyer Isireli Fa said the use of his client's name on Tuesday night's news story was defamatory.

"As far as TRM is concerned, nothing could be further from the truth," he said.

"The payments to George Speight did not originate from TRM but rather from a company known as Anglo Pacific Funding Group LLC

Figure 164 : TRM threatens to sue State, (2000, April 20), p. 3. [747] [NBL]

Chapter 17: Industrial Relations

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Industrial issues	35	1	2.9	26	74.3	8	22.8

Table 14: Industrial Relations, May 1999 to May 2000.

The industrial relations issue surfaced because as soon as the People's Coalition came to power, a plethora of industrial issues emerged. Most of them appeared to be politically or racially slanted against the government. These included the bus strike, the nurses' strike, the teachers strike, the fire-fighters strike and agitation by race-based and racially-oriented trade unions.

Of the total number in this category (Table 14), an overwhelming 75 per cent projected negatively on the new government. It would have been perhaps more appropriate if FT had taken a neutral stance to inform the public on the issues involved. But instead of informing and educating, it appeared to have jumped on the bandwagon of the nationalists in fanning racial hatred through an issue that is traditionally class-based and independent from race.

17.1 Fijian Civil servants and the racial slant

FT editorials gave conflicting signals. It appeared as the writers of editorials changed their balance and the slant changed with this. They did recognise that there were inefficiencies in civil servants, and because of that the government introduced a one-stop shop for investors in The Fiji Trade and Investment Board, which was also frustrated by an inefficient civil service. Hence, FT called for a cleanup in that area (Fig 165):

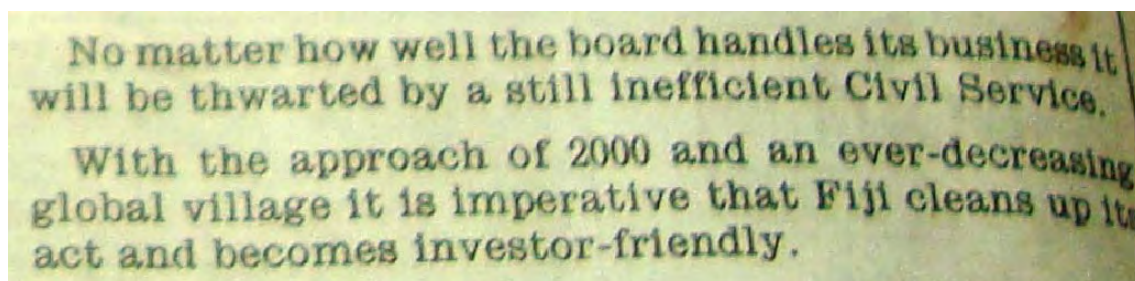


Figure 165 : It's time to smarten up: Editorial, (1999, December 10), p. 6 [507]

In one breath, while FT called for a cleanup in civil service to bring in efficiency, in another breath, they become staunch critic of the government for bringing in those changes it suggested.

It does recognise the fact that the past administration brought in undeserving people into the service and promoted them beyond capacity that was contributing to inefficiencies. FT agrees that the appointments and promotions must be made on merit, irrespective of race, creed, colour or other such attributes (Fig 166):

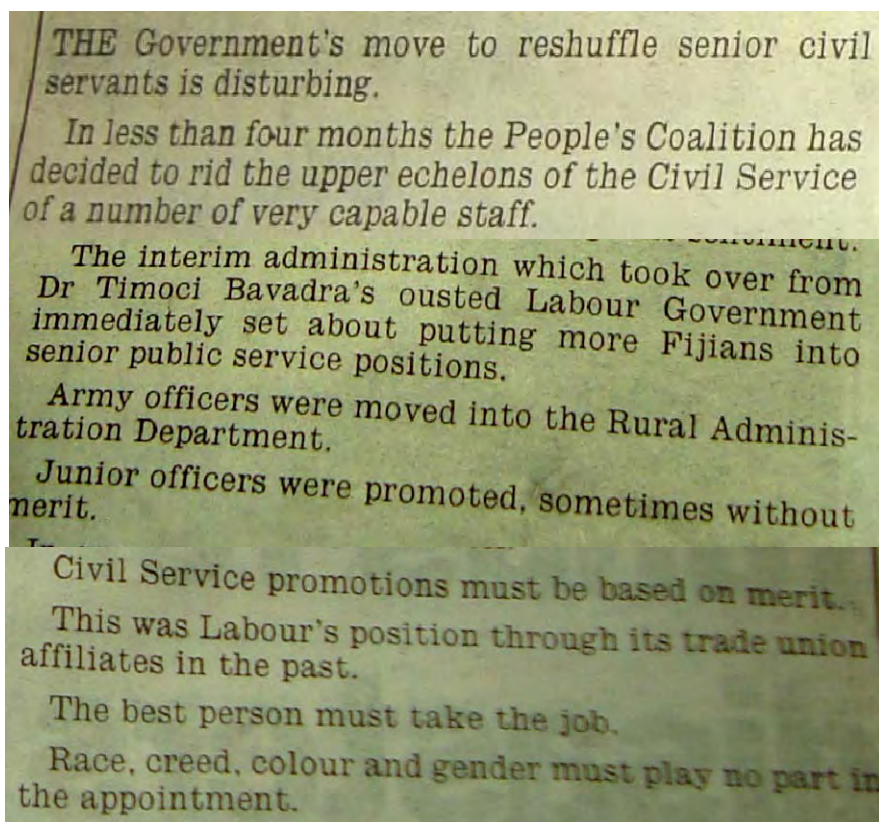


Figure 166 : Base it on merit, Editorial, (1999, September 22), p. 6. [385]

Another editorial a month later (Fig 167) also revealed the understanding of FT towards the problems in civil service which appeared to have been heavily “Fijianised” by the past Fijian dominated, nationalist governments with a slant towards Fijian nationalism. It also recognised that such appointments had led to lethargy and lack of efficiency and any move to change that was welcome.

The fact, of course, is that, because of the policies of the previous government, most of those at risk are Fijians.

There's no doubt that people were promoted into positions they did not merit through family links or political patronage.

The result was a civil service that was far too unresponsive to the needs and demands of the public. There was an attitude in some areas that those employees were the public's masters instead of its servants.

If the Government can change that culture, it should be praised not condemned.

THE reaction by a number of civil servants to changes now happening in the service is predictable and understandable.

Indigenous Fijian civil servants, in particular, view those changes as contrary to their interests.

The Government has been accused of pursuing a racially-biased policy of replacing Fijian civil servants with Indians.

Yet it is generally recognised that Indo-Fijians are woefully under-represented in the higher echelons of the service.

Indeed, the Constitution calls for a racial balance.

... of racism can be

Figure 167 : Handle with care, Editorial, (1999, October 23), p. 6. [436]

However, in the same editorial, (Fig 167) the Dr Jekyll appeared to have changed to Mr Hyde. (Reference here is to the classical novel of this name where a person suffered from bi-polar syndrome (disorder) with one person having two completely opposing characters or personalities). FT appears to be carrying the mantle and agenda of Fijian civil servants, who it recognises are over represented and even the Constitution allows for parity in numbers at all levels based on the population. However, despite being aware of the facts, FT never restrained its star reporter, Margaret Wise, from freely raising racial issues by makeshift organisations, with questionable following and which sprung up overnight to oppose the new government (Fig 168):



Figure 168 : Fijian ministers slated, (1999, September 16), p. 3. [399] [Margaret Wise]

The named organisation, Matabose ni Taukei ni Vanua, had never previously been heard of, and it was led and chaired by a nationalist chief from Ra. This group categorised all actions by the government in racial terms, and FT never ceased to give it the desired publicity with all racial overtones. Such racial references even breach the country's Public Order Act and the Fiji Media Council's Code of Conduct on causing racial discord. In the same meeting covered by Margaret Wise, opportunity was given to both nationalists Apisai Tora and Butadroka to vent their racial venom against the Indo-Fijian community (Fig 169):

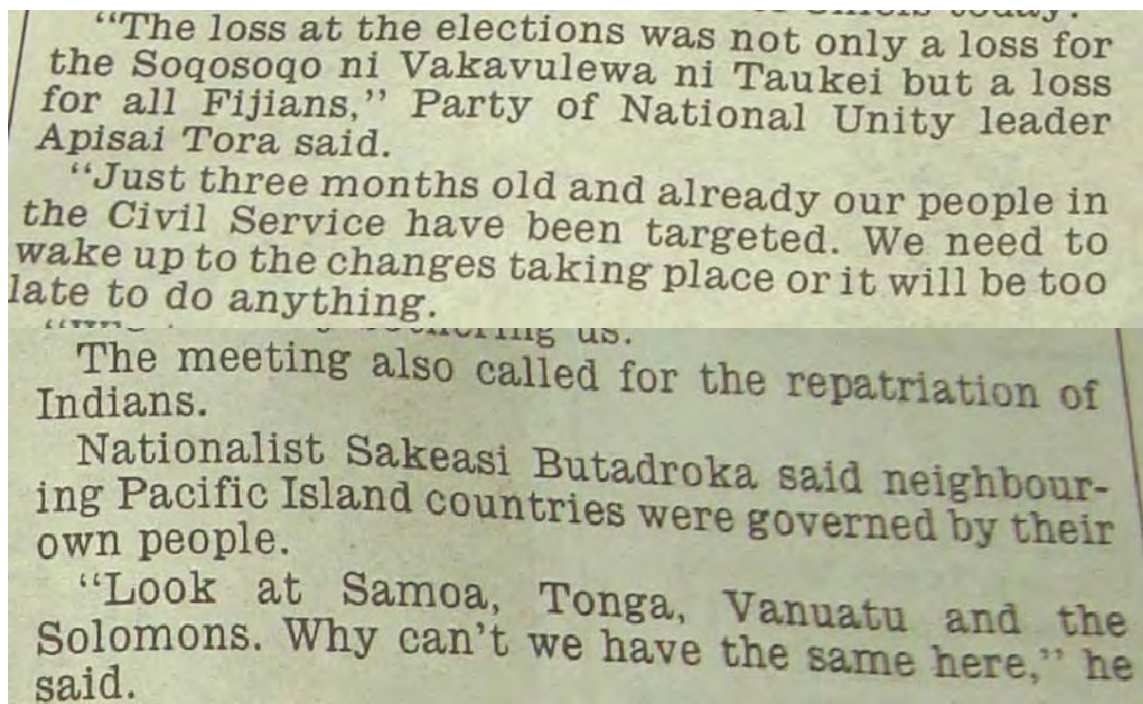


Figure 169 : Landowners defend civil servants, (1999, September 16), p. 3. [399]
[Margaret Wise]

While FT speaks about the propriety of changes in civil service, it does not educate people on the misnomers propagated by these nationalists in the name of indigenous rights. What Butadroka stated above (Fig 169) was seditious and for FT to allow this illegal item to be published was a breach of Media's Code of Conduct as well as law. Calling repatriation of third and fourth generation Indo-Fijians and comparing Fiji to Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu is ignoring the historical perspectives of these countries. What these nationalists were saying was that if those Pacific countries were ruled by the indigenous people, so should Fiji. FT failed in not clarifying this misconception. In fact FT is seen to be spreading this wrong information under the guise of press freedom. This is done through a journalist who was also specifically mentioned by Chaudhry in the launch of the Code of Conduct speech. This was in relation to the story below (Fig 170):



By MARGARET WISE

FIJIAN civil servants yesterday openly criticised Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, attributing their hardening attitude towards the Government to recent changes in the civil service.

The civil servants called on the Government to act on their concerns or face nationwide protests.

Another PWD employee said that, as a Fijian, he was insulted by Mr Chaudhry's statements on the public service.

"Chaudhry should explain what he meant when he said 'I inherited this mess from the previous Government'. The word mess as I understand it, is to describe dirt. Is that how he views Fijians? He is rub-

Figure 170: Show respect, union warns PM, (1999, October, 23), p. 1 [434] [Margaret Wise]

Anybody who wanted to say anything against the government had a field day with this reporter. The "mess" that Chaudhry spoke about had already been told in the editorial earlier where undeserving people, with right connections to Rabuka's regime were

appointed to positions in which they were inefficient and ineffective which Fiji Trade and Investment Board had spoken about. The “mess” was the non-performing civil servants whose leaders, like Taniela Tabu, always took refuge under the shade of racism, without looking at facts. Even FT, being repeated here, failed to inform or educate these people with any intelligent and analytical articles.

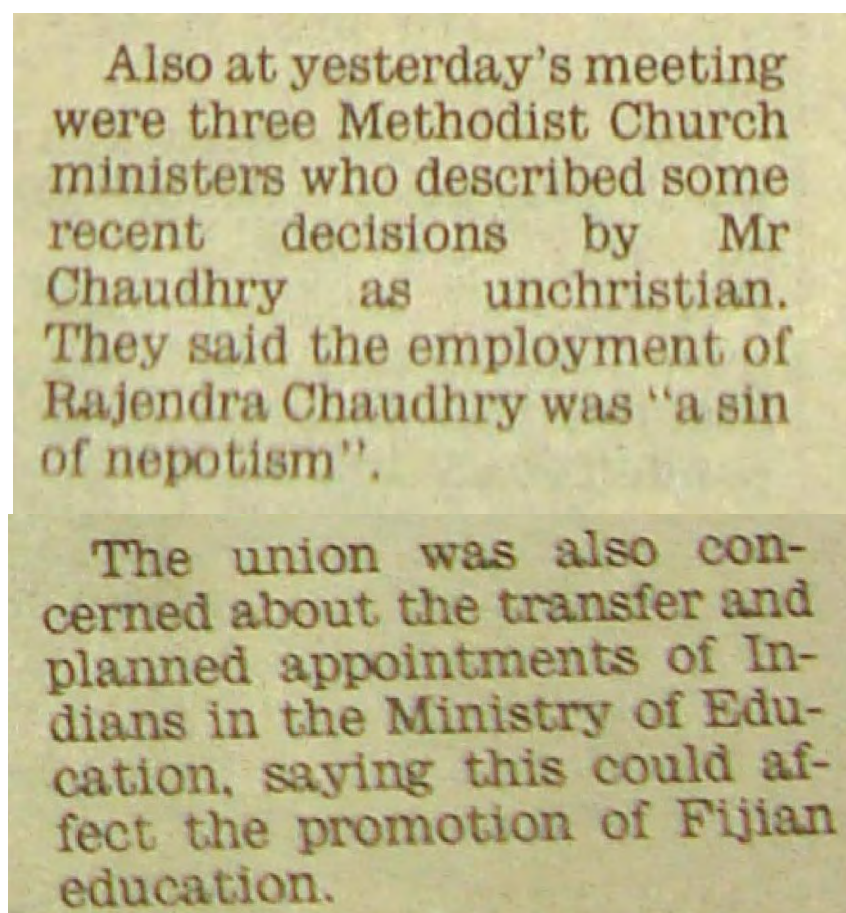


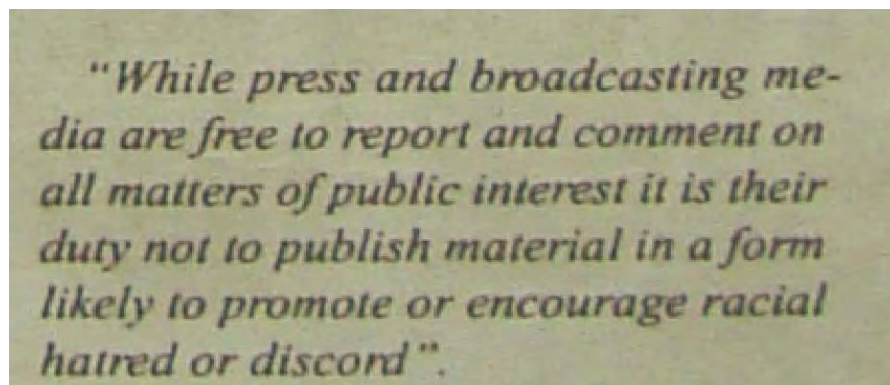
Figure 171 : Show respect, union warns PM, (1999, October 23), p. 1. [434] [Margaret Wise]

What had also become a norm since the new government came to power was that many people had become instant expert and a party in industrial relations issues (Fig 171). Even the editorials of FT spoke about “very capable staff” being reshuffled (Fig 166). One may question since when had staff appraisal and human resource management become an expertise of FT? The same applies to the landowners, the nationalist elements, the heads of newly sprung militant nationalist organisation and the chiefs who had no business in any staffing issues in the government. In the story above, three Methodist Church ministers were also passing themselves as politicians and human resource specialists through their officious interference (Fig 171). The prominence given by FT in promotion of racism as the arguing point and defence for those opposing

any government move based on merit made the task of the new government more difficult.

This became so unbearable for MPC that he took an unprecedented action of attacking the media in general and *The Fiji Times* in particular during the launch of the Fiji Media Code of Conduct. Chaudhry specifically criticised the credibility of Taniela Tabu, the unethical action of FT in not giving all the facts of the story and the role of FT reporter Margaret Wise. She was specifically cited for pushing an agenda against the government because the meeting attended by mere seventy people attracted a great deal of publicity, with front page cover, effective photos and an accompanying editorial. While the story lacked some basic pertinent facts such as location and numbers present, it also was not balanced and failed to take views of the parties who were accused of any wrongdoings. It is this type of imbalance in issues covered by FT that tended to force the government to clarify its position via the letters to editor column. Chaudhry also raised the issue of news stories carrying opinions of the reporters. This had already been pointed out earlier on the story that accused the Housing Minister, Ganesh Chand of “blowing his trumpet.”

Excerpts of how Chaudhry tackled FT in general and Taniela Tabu and Margaret Wise in particular, in that controversial Code of Conduct launch speech is illustrated below (Fig 172). He had reminded journalists about one aspect of the Code of Conduct he launched, and questioned whether FT followed this one:

A photograph of a document with a quote in italics. The text is: *"While press and broadcasting media are free to report and comment on all matters of public interest it is their duty not to publish material in a form likely to promote or encourage racial hatred or discord".*

"While press and broadcasting media are free to report and comment on all matters of public interest it is their duty not to publish material in a form likely to promote or encourage racial hatred or discord".

From what has been reported above on the racial venom against Indo-Fijians by Apisai Tora, Butadroka, Taniela Tabu and other nationalists, it would appear all aspects of this code have been breached by Margaret Wise's stories, encouraged by FT news management team. Chaudhry had much more to say about this episode:

There have been a number of articles on Taniela Tabu breathing fire and brimstone along racial lines, making all kinds of threats and allegations not backed by facts. Yet The Fiji Times continues to pose this man whose own credibility is questionable, having frittered away \$4 million of union membership funds that he can't explain, as the saviour of the Fijian civil servant.

Where did the Taniela Tabu meeting take place? How many people attended the meeting? Isn't it media convention to say where a meeting was held and how many people attended the meeting which claimed front page prominence in The Fiji Times?

It wasn't until I raised this question in my reaction to The Fiji Times report that the paper started there were 100 people at the meeting. My information is that not even 70 people attended that meeting!

Also how come the only reporter present was Margaret Wise of The Fiji Times since none of the other media reported anything on this meeting. It makes one wonder whether there is not a conspiracy at work here between that particular reporter and these anti government elements.

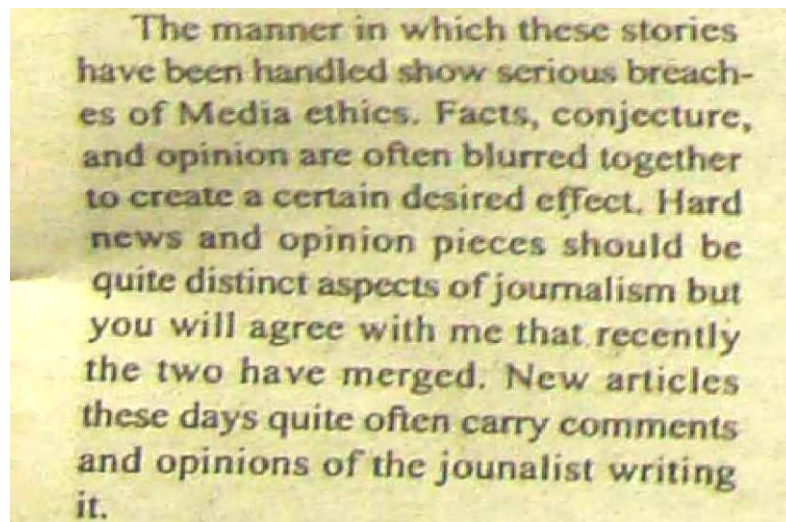


Figure 172 : Prime Minister's address at the launch of the Fiji Media Council Code of Ethics and Practice, (1999, October 30), pp. 2-3. [450/451]

17.2 Chaudhry replies

Another strange feature noticeable in this media content analysis is the marked distinction in reporting stance and tone determined by the race of the reporters as demonstrated by both Fijian and Indo-Fijian reporters respectively. While an analysis is presented in Chapter 26, it would appear that Chaudhry had little comfort and confidence in trusting and relying on Fijian reporters. Most of the positive reports and stories tended to be done by Indo-Fijian reporters. In this instance, then Fiji Times journalist, Sudesh Kissun clarified what had been raised by those opposing Chaudhry, in particular, Taniela Tabu (Fig 173). The report below outlines the issues raised by Tabu, which should have been covered in the first instance by the original author of that report, Margaret Wise, in balancing out her stories. She obviously failed to do that and this reflects on the standard at FT.

Threats don't worry me: PM

PRIME Minister Mahendra Chaudhry said the Government would continue its efforts to ensure an efficient and competent civil service.

Mr Chaudhry said his Government was not worried by threats made by Viti Union of Taukei Workers secretary Taniela Tabu.

“The People’s Coalition has made promises to the people that it intends to deliver on,” said Mr Chaudhry.

“We have the right to make whatever bureaucratic adjustments are necessary to ensure delivery.

“The public service does not run the Government. It is the Government that controls the service.”

Mr Chaudhry said only one permanent secretary was transferred so Mr Tabu’s claims of mass transfer of Fijian permanent secretaries was unfounded.

“As usual Tabu is attempting to stir up racial emotions based on nothing more tangible than speculative nonsense,” he said.

“He provides no shred of evidence to support his racist calls and allegations.”

Mr Chaudhry criticised *The Fiji Times* for giving Mr Tabu’s story prominence without stating how many people attended the union meeting.

A meeting of the union in Suva expressed concern at the transfer of senior Fijian civil servants by the new government.

□ SUDESH KISSUN

Figure 173 : Threats don't worry me: PM, (1999, October 24). P. 3. [438] [Sudesh Kissun]

While some may discount Chaudhry’s comments and criticism against the balance of FT as politicking and media-bashing, the instances quoted above do add some credibility to his allegations.

Chapter 18: Housing issues - Chaudhry and Ganesh Chand

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Ganesh & Chaudhry House	28	0	0	20	71.4	8	28.6

Table 15: The Chaudhry and Ganesh Chand housing issues, May 1999 to May 2000.

Housing issues relating to Mahendra Chaudhry and Ganesh Chand can be characterised as much ado about nothing. This was an unnecessary diversion from the important task of running the country; media, especially FT ably covered by Margaret Wise, took an opportunity to make as wide a coverage as possible. She took advantage of the disarray in the media strategy of the new government and the rookie ministers, who were dependent on the Chaudhrys - either Mahendra or Rajendra, to make decisions for them.

Of all the items covered in this category (Table 15), none projected favourably on the government with a large chunk of 70 per cent reflecting badly, as did most other issues already covered until now.

18.1 House for the Prime Minister: House of confusion

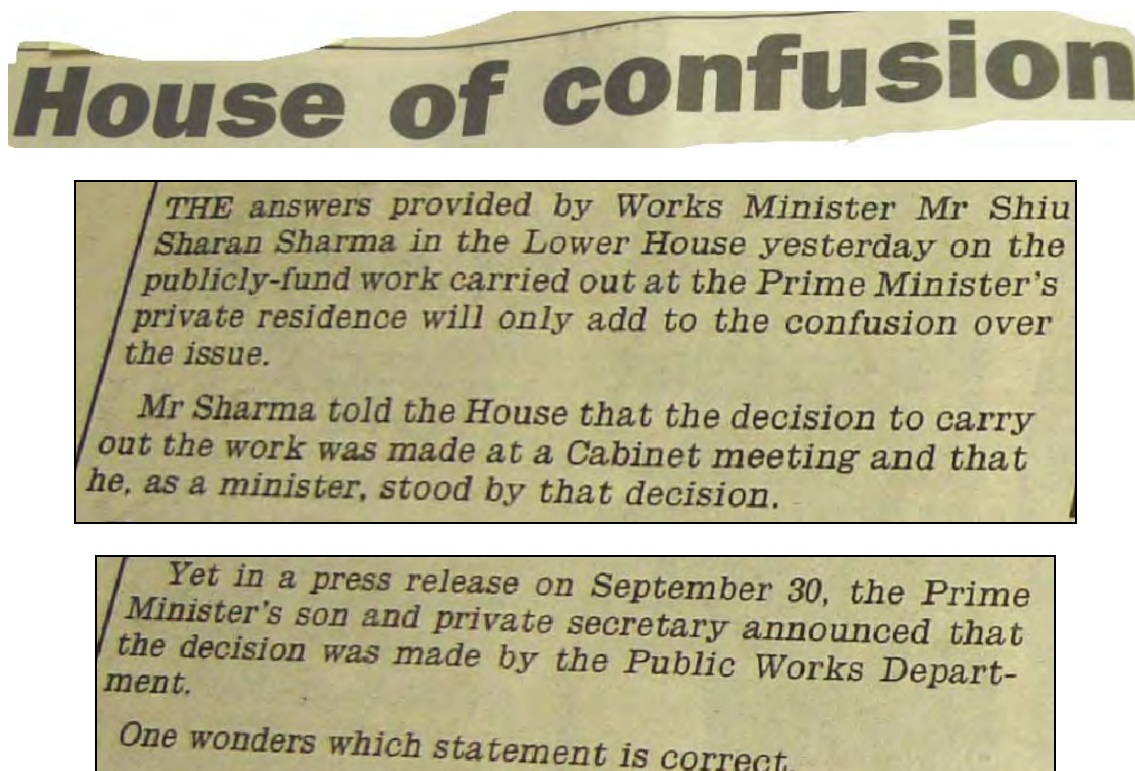
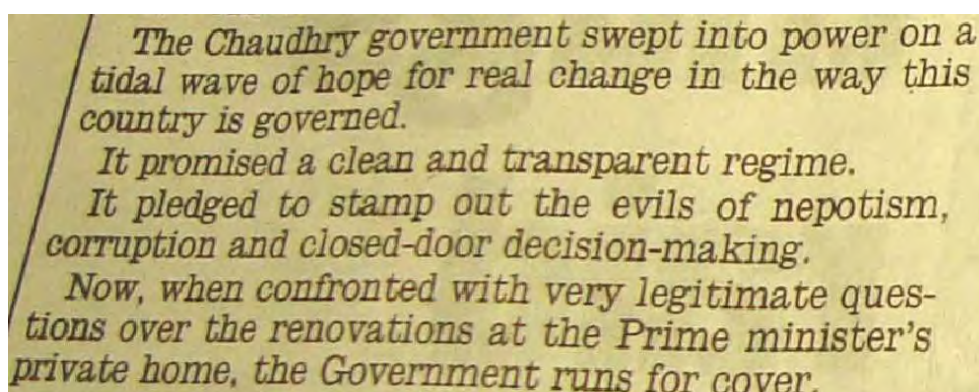


Figure 174 : House of confusion, Editorial, (1999, October 15), p. 6. [426]

The editorial above (Fig 174) and its headline aptly sum up the whole issue which got out of hand because the Prime Minister's officers and those who should know better were not sure what they were talking about. The government was incapable of providing the right answers in light of the added media scrutiny. FT was right in questioning that if public money was to be expended on a prime minister's home - any prime minister's home, the process by which that decision was made needed to be totally transparent. FT had a field day in humiliating the government for its lack of organisation and lack of ability to present a united front on any issue (Fig 175):



The Chaudhry government swept into power on a tidal wave of hope for real change in the way this country is governed. It promised a clean and transparent regime. It pledged to stamp out the evils of nepotism, corruption and closed-door decision-making. Now, when confronted with very legitimate questions over the renovations at the Prime minister's private home, the Government runs for cover.

Figure 175 : Answers are needed, Editorial, (1999, October 2), p. 6. [418]

Media took full advantage of the situation and this reflected on the credibility of not only the Ministers in the new government but other support personnel and advisors who failed to tackle the issue. The fact that the Prime Minister wanted to stay in his personal house and give the former prime minister's house to the Vice-President also created racial issue and the Opposition capitalised on this to attack Chaudhry. The issue of building a new house for the Prime Minister, despite so many government houses available, also created unnecessary controversy. While FT did take this opportunity to repeat some of the issues and regularly highlighted them, the blame for this lethargic strategy rests with the government.

18.2 Ganesh Chand House

After the Prime Minister's house controversy had subsided, Margaret Wise launched with the same zeal into the National Planning Minister, Ganesh Chand's housing issue (Fig 176), and like Chaudhry's house, also ripped into the inexperience and lack of coordination within the various arms of the new government.



Figure 176 : Minister silent on home cost, (2000, February 16), p. 1. [611]

While the house was supposed to be repaired by the Public Works Department, additional private contractors were reportedly hired without following proper procedures. It appears the new government's inexperience in proper coordination and governmental procedures were pursued by FT which took undue interest in each activity of the new government.

Had Margaret Wise been so investigative with the affairs of the National Bank of Fiji and the doings of Rabuka government, FT may have been credited with the saving of the National Bank. FT also got it wrong that the Environment Ministry shifted to the Fiji Football Association building to make way for Ganesh's housing. In fact, six months earlier, Rishi Ram, the Permanent Secretary for Local Government, Housing and Environment had clarified that the proposal for the move was made under the Rabuka government in 1997 because all the ministries were required at one location.

It seems that in media coverage on houses for MPC and Ganesh Chand, FT took undue attention and emphasis in frustrating the inexperience of the ministers and their officials.

Chapter 19: The Housing Authority

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Housing Authority	18	8	44.4	10	55.6	0	0

Table 16: Housing Authority issues, May 1999 to May 2000.

The Housing Authority (HA) saga, as the tension between FT, Dr Ganesh Chand and the new government had been dubbed, was ably shown in a bad light by FT. While the percentage of unfavourable coverage looks small (Table 16), it nevertheless was hurting the initiatives of the new government in trying to help those who needed reduced interest rates. Even a slight reduction in rate for a smaller category of people was turned around into negativity. This was something that the Rabuka government was never able to achieve, as it had turned HA into a profit-making entity, and hence it failed to deliver for most of the low income people waiting for assistance.

This issue perhaps reveals how the media in a developing country should *not* act, and the great need for development journalism to dwell on the positive side of the government, rather than fanning racial hatred and highlighting the negative issues. Most of the issues came to a head within months of the “Indian” government coming to power, while the country has been under “Fijian” government for some 30 years. The ruthlessness with which FT approached the housing initiatives reflects on the leadership and management of its newsroom, and ethics and neutrality of a supposedly free press.

A news item on the next page shows that unusual prominence had been given to an independent Member of Parliament, Simone Kaitani. This had not been so only in this issue, but on others reported as well. In this instance, while his misleading and anti-government opinion appeared on the front page in bold with his photo (Fig 177), a correcting news item by the departing HA CEO Sereana Qoro (Fig 178) merely appeared on page four, and with a misleading headline. The appropriate one should have been “No interference”. This is exactly what she said - that her resignation from HA was a long term exit plan, before she had joined HA. FT allowed this information to be manipulated by opposition politicians, without striving to clarify this misconception as vigorously as it had spread the misinformation.



Figure 177 : Interference caused resignation: MP, (1999, October 6), p. 1. [424] [Rosemary Baleiverata]

Note in the item on the next page, Qoro rejected Kaitani's allegation made above (Fig 177) in bold, but the paper never gave the correcting news below (Fig 178) as much prominence. She actually appreciated the government initiatives.

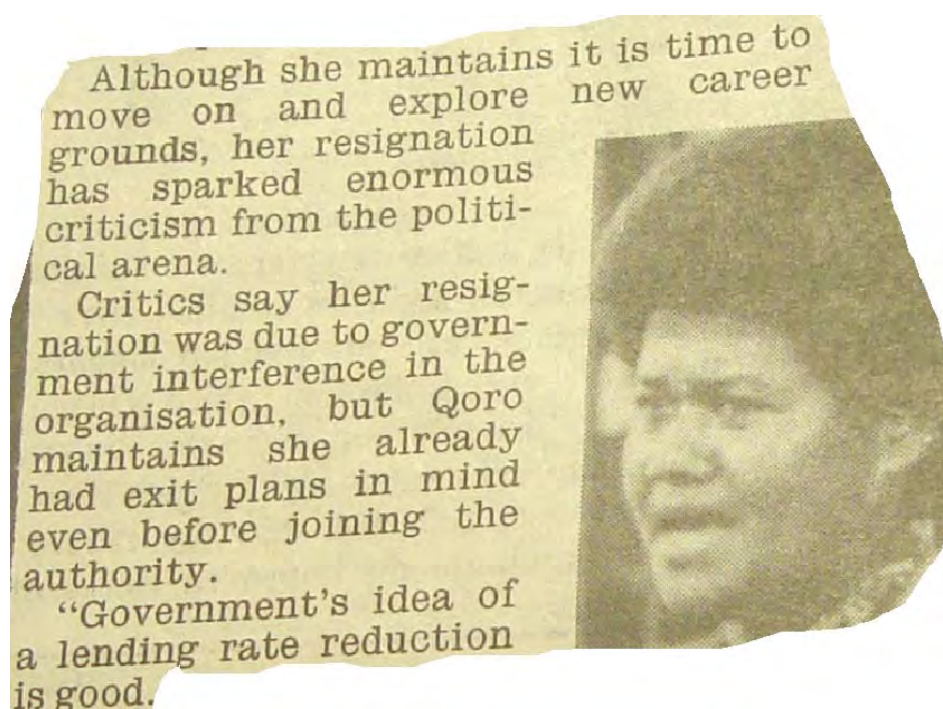


Figure 178 ; Big challenge for HA chief, (1999, October 31), p. 4. [456] [Sainimili Lewa]

In the two editorials below (Figures 179 and 180), the paper again acted inconsistently with praise in one instance, but slating the government when the Opposition politicians criticised the government for not doing enough. And this was only some three months after coming to power.

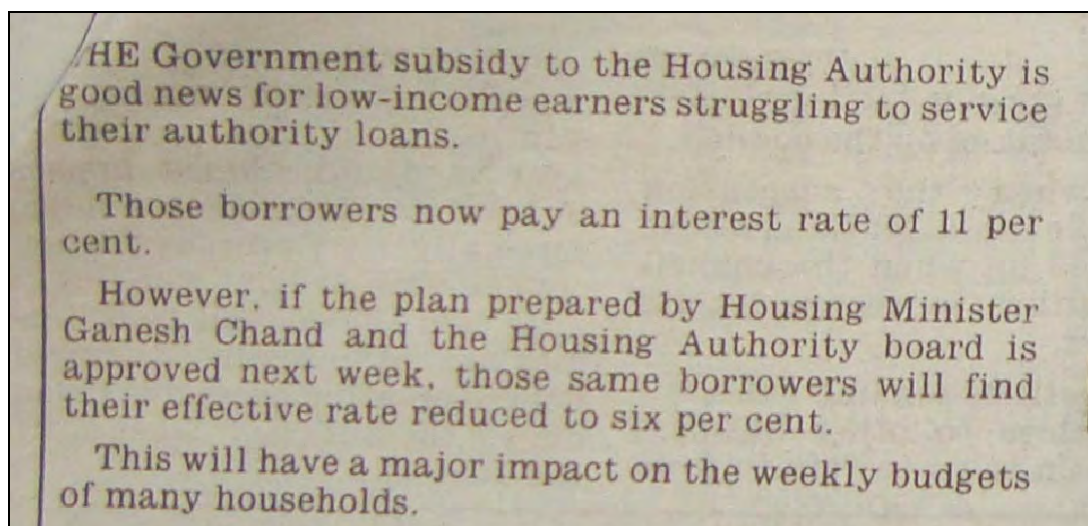


Figure 179 : Subsidy good news, Editorial, (1999, July 10), p. 6. [1056]

Housing Authority borrowers have been cruelly tricked by this Government.

All along, since the days of the election campaign, they were led to believe that their interest rate would fall from 11 per cent to six per cent or less.

Now they know that will not happen in the foreseeable future.

Yet as recently as a week ago the Government was still insisting that the rate would fall.

Figure 180 : Honesty the best bet, Editorial, (1999, September 4), p. 6. [366]

19.1 The negatives

FT continued with its negative publicity about the government's initiatives in bringing down interest rates, and this commenced within months of the new government taking office (Figures 181 to 184). One issue that ought to be raised was whether Margaret Wise and the other reporters or FT were as investigative and interested in the inefficiencies of the past Board as was revealed by the Minister of Housing later?

In whose interest is it?

3/9/99-8-6
54

THE
Fiji Times

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Figure 181 : In whose interest is it? Editorial, (1999, September 3), p. 6. [362]

Housing interest cut hardly helps

Thousands miss out, those eligible too poor to afford it

By MARGARET WISE

Figure 182: Housing interest cut hardly helps, (1999, September 3), p. 3. [361] [Margaret Wise]

Housing Authority borrowers warn of protest march

Fury at loan 'lies'

By MARGARET WISE

Figure 183 : Fury at loan lies, (1999, September 4), p. 1. [364] [Margaret Wise]



Figure 184 : The Housing Authority Debate, Special coverage, (1999, September 4), p. 3. [365] [Luisa Tora, Ruci Mafi, and Sudesh Kissun]

The prominence and priority given to Kaitani, an Independent Member of Parliament (Figs 185 and 186), contrasted with editorial treatment for Ministers who struggled to get similar prominence to tell their side of the story. Hence the government was forced to resort to letters to editor column to clarify their issues.



Figure 188 : Subsidy good news, Editorial, (1999, July 10), p. 6. [1056]



Figure 189 : HA drops rates to 9.5%, (2000, January 4), p. 2. [565] [Shobna Chandra]



Figure 190 : A welcome relief, Editorial (2000, January 4), p. 6. [566]

19.3 The issues with a non-performing Rabuka Board and a partisan media

When the new government took over, it not only had to contend with the hurdle of an antagonistic media and a hostile Opposition, but also some of the hangers-on from the past Rabuka government who were not prepared to accept the fact that the new government wanted changes. This was also the case with the HA board, chaired by Sitiveni Weleilakeba, who was also chief executive of Fijian Holdings Limited and a supposedly “star” performer for the Rabuka government, who apparently sat on some 15 boards. When Dr Ganesh Chand took over as Minister for Housing, Weleilakeba was not prepared to accept change and see eye to eye with the new government policies. This trend was seen by the Minister and was reported by Sudesh Kissun as follows (Fig 191):

Housing showdown looms

By SUDESH KISSUN

A SHOWDOWN looms between the Government and the Housing Authority board over the lowering of the authority's lending rates.

The Government wants authority chairman Siti-veni Welellakeba to explain his media statement on a Cabinet directive to bring down the interest rate for low income earners to six per cent.

"But from the chairman's comments, it appears they don't want to follow our directive.

"If that's the case they should step down voluntarily and make way for those people who can do it."

Mr Welellakeba, who was appointed by the former administration, said he saw no reason to resign from the board. "I serve on 15 boards and this is just one of them," he said.

"I'm not under pressure and I'm not feeling the heat then why should I resign?"

Figure 191 : Housing showdown looms, (1999, September 6), p. 5. [372] [Sudesh Kissun]

19.4 Reporters with bias and 'borders'

What has become evident in this content analysis is the slant of news and its relationship with the ethnicity of reporters. Most negative news stories on the new government originated from the Fijian reporters while any positive news or news with some message that otherwise failed to see the papers were covered by Indo-Fijians. While the analysis by race of reporters was not intended as part of the scope of this thesis, the distinction became so obvious that a section needed to be devoted to this issue (Chapter 26).

Sudesh Kissun had been reporting on positive news of the new government and also accompanied Chaudhry on at least one overseas visit to New Zealand. He also covered the news about the tension between the Housing Minister and his HA Board (Fig 191).

The feature story below, titled *Face to Face*, with an extensive interview, is done by another Indo-Fijian reporter, Bernadette Hussain (nee Bhagwan). Readers will note that I have taken liberty to use the story in greater detail. This is because it critiques balance and neutrality of FT which, while persistently reporting any wrongs of the new government, was lethargic to raise anything negative about the previous Rabuka administration. Margaret Wise, who was usually quick to seize on the mistakes of the Chaudhry government, was unable to pick a headline-making item on the slackness, lethargy and ineffectiveness of the old HA Board, which Housing Minister Dr Ganesh Chand had highlighted. In other free media, such accusation against the “star” board member of the Rabuka government would have made front page news, but in this instance it remained relatively hidden in the feature article done by Hussain.

What FT failed to tell its readers is the failure of past “Fijian” governments to deliver to the grassroots Fijian people because they failed to monitor the performance of Boards headed by elite Fijians like Weleilakeba. The question that arises here is: would the Fijian reporters in FT have allowed such lethargy and negligence to go unreported if committed by an Indo-Fijian in the Chaudhry government? This was evident in the Chaudhry and Dr Ganesh Chand housing issues where the sharpness of the reporters was highly visible yet while reporting on a HA Board, they were not evident. The coverage in the following pages (Fig 192) substantiates this and reveals the flaws of FT as a responsible Third World media in search of truth.

FACE TO FACE

Home, where the heart is



Obviously some members of the board do not seem to have accepted the fact that there is a new government with a specific policy in HA. This policy directive given by myself to the board is in fact not only consistent with the Housing Act, but it furthers the objective of the Housing Act.

Now the issue is whether the HA can adequately cater for providing affordable housing to low income earners without much government assistance.

I am confident that to bring about a reduction in interest from 11.5 per cent to six per cent for low income earners, we can do this without resorting to a massive government handout.

The immediate past chairman of the HA board, on the other hand, was adamant that the Government had to give a subsidy of over \$6.5 million annually for the interest reduction. My response is that any fool with a \$6.5 million plus grant from the Government can reduce the interest from 11.5 per cent to six per cent.

There will be no need for a board even. The duty of the board is more than meeting monthly over coffee and sandwiches. It is to be proactive and ensure that the HA gets the best deal in the market.

There are for example many loans which can be renegotiated. One major loan in fact even has this provision in the loan's terms and conditions. The board did nothing like this. Indeed, it was not proactive.

private sector setting this could have been construed as negligence even. The previous government tolerated the laid-back approach of the board.

I began raising these issues with the HA. Obviously this necessitates a lot of work on the part of HA. It is very demanding. But this is how it is. A board must live to the challenges it faces.

The failure of the past chairman to face the challenges has been very worrying. I got very concerned, for example, when I asked the HA on how it could deliver a reduction in interest rate from 11.5 per cent to six per cent, to provide me a paper which asked for nothing but a subsidy.

But more than this, the paper was prepared by a paid consultant. Instead of HA itself analysing its portfolios and activities and looking at options, it commissioned for the work done. What, then, one wonders, remain the duty of board and HA?

There are other examples of such laid-back attitude. One case is when we arranged for a \$15 million loan for a very low interest rate, the board gave one excuse or the other to avoid taking this loan. It killed about three weeks. Now no lender will sit with \$15 million idle and wait for HA to advertise for tenders. When finally the ad came out, it was too late. We missed this loan, and the opportunity to reduce interest any earlier than when we did.

**Figure 192 : Home, where the heart is, Face to Face, (1999, October 25), p. 7. [440]
[Bernadette Hussain]**

This issue about Margaret Wise was of intense importance not only because it was covered earlier in the literature review by Robie (2002a, p. 8) and she was named by Chaudhry in the controversial Code of Conduct launch speech, but because of glaring examples that were noted in the course of this analysis. Because of the intense importance and controversies of this reporter, the next section is devoted to her.

Chapter 20: Margaret Wise

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Margaret Wise	39	0	0	39	100	0	0

Table 17: Margaret Wise, May 1999 to May 2000.

All the stories that were picked under the Margaret Wise category placed Chaudhry and the People's Coalition Government in a negative and unfavourable position (Table 17). There were indications that Margaret Wise was anti-Chaudhry and pro-Taukei Movement, as she usually happened to be at the splinter meeting of lost politicians with groups lacking serious following. Thanks to the evidently partisan reporters at FT, these divisive elements got substantial exposure in FT with photos and inciteful and racially skewed quotes which certainly breached the Code of Conduct that Chaudhry had launched. Chaudhry named her as a journalist with an agenda against his government.

In fact, as earlier reported in the literature review, Field, Baba and Nabobo-Baba (2005) shed additional light on stories reported by Wise:

The Rupert Murdoch-owned *Fiji Times* decided, almost by default and as a result of one particular reporter that they were going to get rid of Chaudhry. Reporter Margaret Wise tore into Chaudhry with many an unsourced story which the paper had no qualms about publishing. What was known to the newspaper, but not shared with readers and now a matter of court record, was that she was also Rabuka's lover and had a child by him. (p. 62)

20.1 Relationship with Rabuka

It was MPC and his People's Coalition Government that soundly defeated Rabuka and his SVT consigned to oblivion. The extra marital and unethical sexual relationship between FT's political star reporter Margaret Wise and the political leader soundly beaten by Chaudhry, Sitiveni Rabuka, was reported in FT. Michael Field (2010), in his *Swimming with Sharks* mentioned this:

Rabuka fathered a boy with [Margaret] Wise and then denied it was his. I was often in Fiji at the time, covering treason and mutiny trials. More than once I would run into Rabuka after Wise took him to court. 'A DNA test revealed Mr Rabuka was 99.999 percent [certain] to be the likely father of the 18-month old boy,' the *Fiji Times* said.

The court found he was the father and he was ordered to pay F\$30 a week. (p. 179)

The ethical issue that arises here is that when she was reporting against the Chaudhry government, she was also having an affair with Rabuka. How would a multinational, Rupert Murdoch's media, allow such a conflict of interest to exist without any control, and with the apparent knowledge, encouragement and the blessings from FT management? Why did publisher Alan Robinson and editor-in-chief Russell Hunter allow this unethical media practice to flourish?

20.2 Racial slant

Within days after the defeat of Rabuka by Chaudhry, she was out and about, reporting on behalf of those who were soundly beaten at the ballots through a democratic process. Her writings carried racial overtones and frequently aired potentially seditious statements by the nationalist politicians (Fig 193):

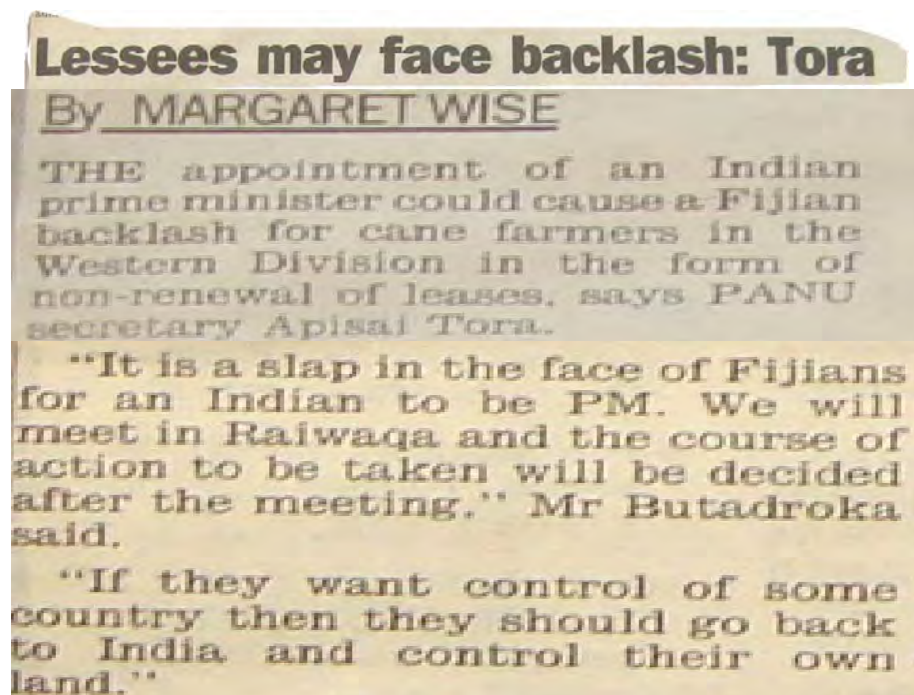


Figure 193 : Lessees may face backlash, (1999, May 20), p. 3. [938][Margaret Wise]

What FT and Margaret Wise neglected to inform these nationalist elements was that most of the people they called "Indians" were not Indians but Indo-Fijians through birth, some spanning four generations. They knew no other home apart from Fiji. FT owed a moral, if not legal obligation as the leading newspaper to properly inform and explain this difference, if they had taken the liberty of quoting such erroneous and seditious statements.

The article below by Margaret Wise, attributed to Taniela Tabu, uses the term “Indianisation.” Yet, as a reporter she failed to compare the number of Indo-Fijian civil servants with Fijians and educate herself on any disparity before blindly granting credence to a trade unionist who broke all the international and universal protocols, ethics, principles and conventions of trade unionism by heading a trade union which restricted membership upon racial lines. Rajeshwar Singh of the Fiji Public Service Association explained what Wise and FT should have correctly reported was that there was no “Indianisation” because “Fijianisation” had already been entrenched by the past Fijian nationalist governments (Fig 194):

There are five Indo-Fijian permanent secretaries in Government, one of who is Fiji's envoy in Washington, Amraiya Naidu.

“In comparison there are 30 Fijian permanent secretaries who constitutes 86 per cent of the total permanent secretaries,” he said.

There are 10 missions abroad, Mr Singh said.

“In the senior management levels, there are 80 per cent Fijians and 20 per cent others. The racial composition (of diplomatic leaders) is a breach of the provisions of the 1997 Constitution.

Figure 194 : Envoy recall draws fire, (2001, October 15). p. 5. [1137] [Frederica Elbourne]

Another key issue was the propensity of Fijian journalists in general, and Margaret Wise in particular, to run stories or seek comments from those extremist Fijians like Apisai Tora, Simione Kaitani, Sakiasi Butadroka and Taniela Tabu, among others, who lost much with the defeat of the Rabuka government and had an axe to grind (Fig 195). Another noticeable feature was that FT coverage of these extremist elements came with photos, was given prominent front page or page 3 treatment and in some instances, came in bold type with borders for maximum display. At the same time, government statements were pushed to the inside pages, with many parts edited out, as indicated by

comments from affected Ministers and officials who were forced to tell their side of the story through letters to the editor column to balance the one-sided coverage of FT stories.

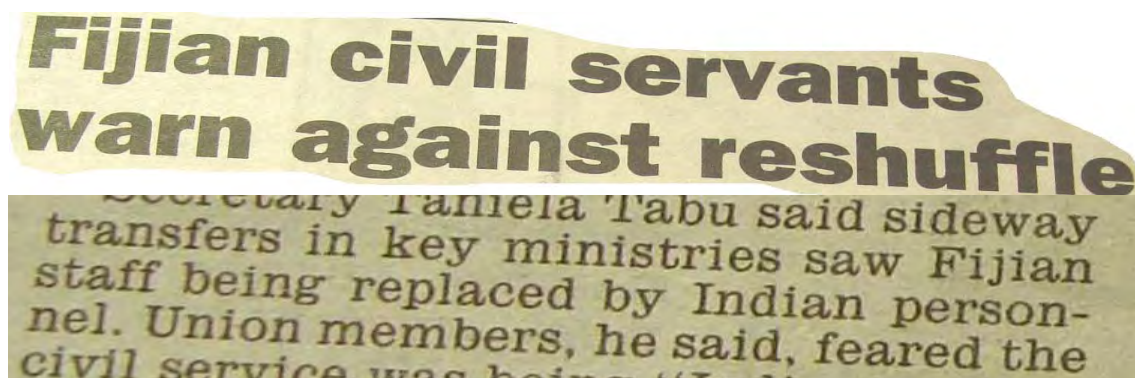


Figure 195 : Fijian civil servants warn against reshuffle, (1999, August 28), p. 3. [352][Margaret Wise]



Figure 196 : Vayeshnoi wants officer removed from ministry, (1999, August 31), p. 3 [354] [Margaret Wise]

The above (Fig 196) is a classic case of a storm in a tea cup. Any staffing issue is a confidential matter and even the slightest of issues reach the pages of FT which seeks questions, but one fails to know why they fail to probe more important issues relating to Rabuka government (and as we will also see later, during Qarase's SDL government in Chapter 27). One issue in question is the HA board's dereliction of duties as uncovered by Minister Dr Ganesh Chand earlier in Chapter 19.

20.3 Report on Provincial Council meetings with Maika Qarikau

A repetitive trend that was seen in the Provincial Council meetings was that such meetings were led by Maika Qarikau and Wise played a key role in reporting on most of them. In most instances, Qarikau was seen to be agitating and encouraging landowners to oppose any government initiative. FT, if it had been neutral, impartial and a disinterested party should have realised that Qarikau had an axe to grind against the government and was not an independent player. He was removed from the board of the

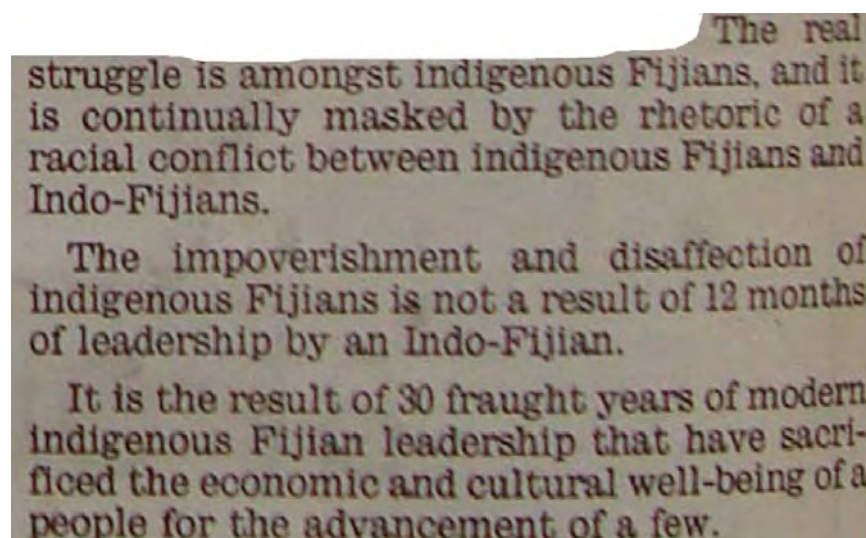
FDB by Chaudhry, and it appears Wise, with other FT Fijian reporters, sided with the respective provincial councils through wide coverage of anti-government statements, and especially verbatim reporting of all what Qarikau said, even with racial slant (Fig 197). In the instance below, with the question ‘what was there for the landlord?’ FT should have posed this to the previous Fijian leadership which had ruled Fiji for the last 30 years. Chaudhry came on board less than 10 months ago. Why was this question posed to him now?



Figure 197 : What's for the landlord? (2000, April 10), p. 3 [719] [Margaret Wise]

If Margaret Wise was such a disinterested party, she should have posed this question to Rabuka who had committed the 1987 coup in the name of indigenous rights. What did his government deliver in the last 12 years of post-Rabuka rule for the Fijians? And what did the respective Fijian governments since 1970 independence of Fiji deliver? The answer was available had the reporters at FT been more analytical and had exposure and training in writing analytical articles. The answer was provided as has already been covered earlier in our literature review, but also as published in FT. A former Fiji-born USP academic and currently Victoria University academic in Pacific

issues, Dr Teresia Teaiwa summed this up appropriately for those less enlightened reporters at FT:



The real struggle is amongst indigenous Fijians, and it is continually masked by the rhetoric of a racial conflict between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians.

The impoverishment and disaffection of indigenous Fijians is not a result of 12 months of leadership by an Indo-Fijian.

It is the result of 30 fraught years of modern indigenous Fijian leadership that have sacrificed the economic and cultural well-being of a people for the advancement of a few.

Figure 198 : Teresia Teaiwa, Nationalism with no nation, Opinion, (2000, May 25), p. 16. [1095]

20.4 The Millennium articles

It was strange that FT decided to run “researched” feature articles to mark the new millennium and ironically this was given to Margaret Wise, who, like the old paper, displayed anti-Indian sentiments. Hardly anything complimentary would be found in historical records of FT because, according to Gaunder (2006), the newspaper commenced with anti-Indian propaganda in its very early days, and despite so much atrocities on them, always depicted “Indians as a mysterious race of criminals to whom violence came naturally” (p. 8).

One would have thought that FT may wish to redeem itself to a community through some historical research, but it made the error of selecting somebody who only succeeded in picking articles that portrayed Indians in a bad light. She picked the article on the historical 1920 strike which, according to Gillion (1977) was for bread and butter issues. “The Indian farmer was faced with high store prices, heavy debts and low returns from the cultivation of cane and other crops like bananas” (p. 36). Hence he had to resort to strike for higher pay.

The article that was selected (Fig 199) portrayed Indians as culprits who placed hardship for the ‘*sahebs*’ or the Europeans who suffered because of the strike, without any sympathy for the suffering Indians.

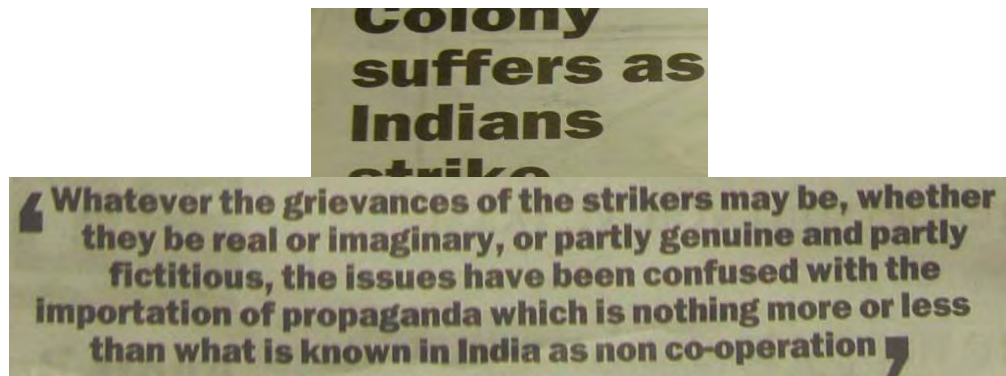


Figure 199 : Colony suffers as Indians strike, Year 2000 Countdown feature, (1999, December 14), p. 22. [520][Compiled and researched by Margaret Wise]

The article below (Fig 200) also depicts Indians as cunning and sly, being able to get the best out of the chiefs. There were other positive historical issues FT could have researched, such as the support given by the Fijians in saving the victims of Syria ship disaster and other articles that unite us as people rather than issues that divide us as Indians and Fijians. This sense of media responsibility and ethics, leaning on developmental journalism was prominently missing from the FT news team, and reflected poorly on those heading the news team.

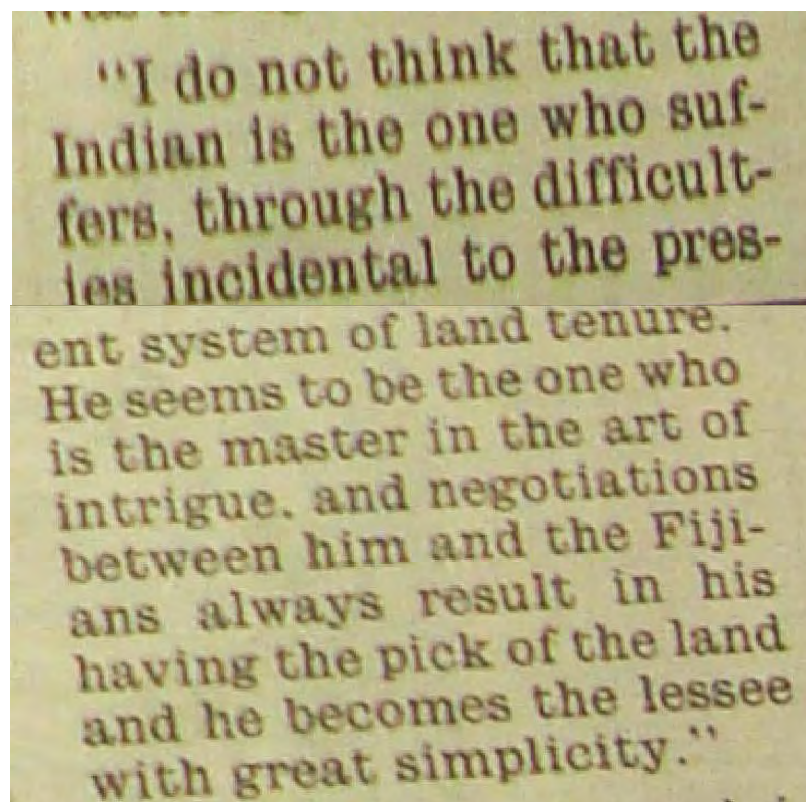


Figure 200 : Negotiations settled: Land boss explains matters, Year 2000 Countdown feature, (1999, December 14), p. 23. [521] [Compiled and researched by Margaret Wise]

Throughout the analysis in this thesis, articles by Margaret Wise raise the issues of balance, ethics, sense of morality and responsibility of FT as the country's leading newspaper in a developing country, fractured by racial issues.

20.5 Issue of ethics- a hypothetical NZ case

As comparative hypothetical example, assume that in the next election, the NZ Labour Party soundly defeated John Key's National Party, and John Key left politics in humiliation. At the same time it is revealed that when in government, John Key had an affair with Margaret Wishbone, the political editor of New Zealand's mainstream daily paper. She was a mistress of Key and had a child through him out of wedlock, and Key pays for the child support. Wishbone used to go around tours with Key when he was PM and got juicy government stories and exclusives from him in return for sex. The term used to describe such a journalist's professional activity is "skirt journalism".

Now assume that after the loss of Key, Phil Goff of NZ Labour Party takes over as PM, and Wishbone, using her media role, and despising for Goff for disposing her lover, wages a media war and racial agitation to destabilise Goff's government. Wishbone sides with the Maori activists and the trade union movement and writes sensational and emotional one-sided articles, without balance, depicting Pakehas (Europeans) as "thieves and land stealers" and indulges in authoring racially divisive and hate articles, and promoting industrial relations unrest through partisan media coverage. She also uses her position to carry out muckraking on any activity that the government takes part in and blows up all issues in a negative tone. While she writes some articles with her byline, the other racially divisive articles written by her go without any bylines.

The ethical question that arises here is that should that leading newspaper, as the largest multinational mainstream media of New Zealand, allow such obvious conflict of interest and abuse of journalism ethics go unchallenged? Would such a situation have been allowed to flourish in NZ media? Would the NZ civil society and other watchdog organisations have allowed such a grave matter to go unchecked?

No? Well, why was this allowed to flourish at our doorsteps, in a country just three hours flight north of New Zealand – in the Republic of Fiji Islands, at *The Fiji Times* owned by a media mogul living in the United States of America. The hypothetical scene depicted above was played out by Margaret Wise with Mahendra Chaudhry.

Chapter 21: *Fiji's Daily Post* and Radio Fiji Controversies

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Daily Post & Radio Fiji Ban	11	0	0	4	36.4	7	63.6

Table 18: *Fiji's Daily Post* and Radio Fiji issues, May 1999 to May 2000.

Issues relating to *Fiji's Daily Post* and Radio Fiji reflect on the author's personal experience of the standard of MPC's leadership style. The added advantage of this research is that the author had been a part of what took place in 2000 and hence has an insider's perspective of the situation. There was nothing favourable in this news coverage (Table 18), with one third of it being unfavourable while the major part was deemed neutral.

When I, the thesis author, was publisher and general manager of *Fiji's Daily Post* newspaper in March 1999, I used to host a voluntary programme in Fiji Hindi in Radio Fiji upon invitation by the State-owned station to promote the distinct Fiji Hindi language. The presentation covered social, economic and political issues, among others. When the Chaudhry government came to power in May 1999, the programme supported him and encouraged him to have a smooth transition for some six months after which I also became critical of his actions and his abrasive ways of handling people and causing discord through questionable actions. Criticism of his government was not palatable to MPC who not only ordered my removal from the programme but also questioned my appointment at *Fiji's Daily Post*. One may assume a Prime Minister had more important things to do and leave personnel matters of government-owned organisations to the board it had appointed. The Fiji Media Council came to my rescue (Fig 201):

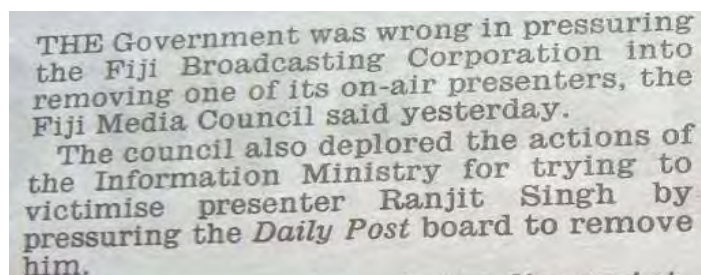


Figure 201 : State wrong: Council, (2000, March 23), p. 2. [664] [NBL]

While the NFP used this action for political gain (Fig 202), they nevertheless were correct in their statement as to why I was removed:

Figure 202 : NFP accuses Minister for violating freedom, (2000, March 18), p. 5. [657] [NBL]

In the meantime the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) was correct in assessing that Chaudhry was behind my removal (Fig 203):

Figure 203: Anger over radio ban, (2000, March 18), p. 5. [656] [Frederica Delailomaloma]

In fact they were correct, but the new government was confused over the reasons for my removal. While Chaudhry said it was for my support for the NFP, Vayeshnoi had a complete different reason. He told Radio Fiji that I was removed because I used “junglee” Hindi. He effectively classified his mother tongue as a crude, rustic and adulterated Hindi language,

When I was contacted by FT for comments on my removal from the programme, it came as a big shock. I then realised that the failure of Chaudhry to pay heed to his critics to change his ways would be his downfall. Hence when Speight took his government hostage, it did not come as a complete surprise. This is because Mahendra Chaudhry’s worst enemy was himself. He had surrounded himself with lightweight advisors who were never a threat to his leadership. He appears to shun educated people and chose those people as his candidates for elections who attended most weddings and funerals in their villages.

Unlike the earlier National Federation Party (NFP) and Fijian political parties such as the SVT and later the SDL, FLP did not have a pool of well-educated and exposed candidates who could handle the task of running a government, despite the availability of so many in the Indo-Fijian community.

Lal (2010), in his book on Jai Ram Reddy summed this trend of FLP as ‘people power’ that Jai Ram Reddy called” Parliament by Proxy” (p. 26). Lal reiterates that “Reddy’s choice of well educated and otherwise qualified people as candidates in the election made perfect sense from a rational point of view: to put people in parliament who could make informed contribution to national decision-making”(Ibid).

But Labour adroitly used it against the NFP, portraying it as the party of the rich and professional elite. For its part, it chose people from the community, many with elementary formal education, some barely able to speak English, or read haltingly speeches prepared for them by others, but who were a regular presence at community functions, in constant circulation among the people at the grassroots level. (Ibid, p. 26)

Among others, that was the reason why FT had a field day in ridiculing his government because without Chaudhry, his government was like headless chickens. In Chaudhry style, he never allowed his ministers to think independently, and paid heavily for this failing.

Chapter 22: Punja & Companies

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Punja & Companies	5	1	20	1	20	3	60

Table 19: Punja and Companies, May 1999 to May 2000.

Punja in this discussion refers to Fiji's business tycoon, Hari Punja who owns the Flour Mills of Fiji group of companies. Only five news items were covered in the Punja and companies category (Table 19); most of them were neutral. The purpose in picking this particular subject was to explore a motive for the coup by George Speight and show a reason why the business community in Fiji would wish to get rid of Chaudhry government. The new government was seen as one with a greater leaning towards poorer people with socialistic tendencies which ran contrary to the objectives of the business community.

22.1 A motive for the removal of Chaudhry government

In this instance, the Chaudhry government had taken on the might of the Hari-Punja-controlled Flour Mills of Fiji group which owned the near monopoly, Rice Company of Fiji Limited. The Chaudhry government had announced its intention of introducing licensing of rice in order to protect its State-owned fledgling enterprise, Rewa Rice Limited, which had gone through trading difficulties because of ineffective management of the past governments. In response to government's intention of licensing, this is what Sanjay Punja, son of Hari Punja of The Rice Company of Fiji Limited put out in an advertisement (Fig 204):

The purpose of re-introducing the licensing of imported rice is to protect the Government owned Rewa Rice Limited which is unable to compete due to their inefficiencies.

I wish to inform the shareholders of The Rice Company of Fiji Limited and the Public that the following are the likely effects should the Government go ahead with its intention:-

1. A substantial increase in the price of rice to the consumers of Fiji.
2. This decision is against the WTO Rules and also against the Fair Trading Act.
3. Loss of jobs, to be precise in excess of 50 employees will be laid off from our company.
4. Shortages and irregular supply of rice will be expected in the market place.
5. Competition in the rice industry will cease.
6. Due to the above two points there will be deterioration in the quality of rice.
7. Consumers of Fiji will subsidize the Rewa Rice Limited by paying a higher price for rice.

Figure 204 : Advertisement: Notice to the public and all shareholders of the Rice Company of Fiji Limited, (2000, January 12), p. 25. [574]

In a news statement, Chaudhry responded to and rebutted Punja's statement as follows (Fig 205):

- On WTO rules — the Government could invoke provisions which allowed protection of local industries;
- On job losses — Mr Punja had no employees because his company was one on paper only, operating through Flour Mills of Fiji;
- On shortage and irregular supply of rice — with increased local supply, all demands would be met;
- On the loss of competition — the industry was already restricted with only a few major players but with Rewa Rice operating again, competition and a major improvement in rice quality was ensured.

Figure 205 : PM warns rice importers, (2000, January 12), p. 3. [572 [Matelita Ragogo]

Flour Mills of Fiji (FMF) runs a flour milling operations. It also has a subsidiary which is called the Rice Company of Fiji Limited which does not have a separate compliment of staff as alleged by Sanjay Punja. Hence the case of job losses and investment in rice industry by the Punja group was questionable. This was recognised by the government. The chairman of Rewa Rice summed it up as follows (Fig 206):



Figure 206 : Senimoli, Ilaisa, Rice quota, LTE, (2000, January 19), p. 6. [582]

Hari Punja's Flour Mills of Fiji Group is one of the wealthiest, most powerful and successful business organisations in Fiji. The Chaudhry government's socialist policy was against the company's capitalist and profit-oriented policies. The government's new policy on rice had a potential of impacting heavily on Hari Punja's companies. It was in the interests of this company if this government were to go.

22.2 Revelations in a court on involvement of Punja

In a court case in February 2003, a witness named Punja and had implicated Punja and Sons. This is because, for many non Indo-Fijians, it is confusing to make the distinction between Punja and Sons (the original parent company) and the Hari Punja group (the breakaway Hari Punja companies) which includes Flour Mills of Fiji and The Rice Company of Fiji. (Hari Punja also has an interest in Communications Fiji Limited which owns the FM 96 group of radio stations). Another big business, C.J. Patel (which now also has shares in *Fiji Sun*) was also named. In response to the claims, the following advertisements were respectively placed by Punja and Sons (Fig 207) and C. J Patel & Company Ltd (Fig 208) to deny any involvement:

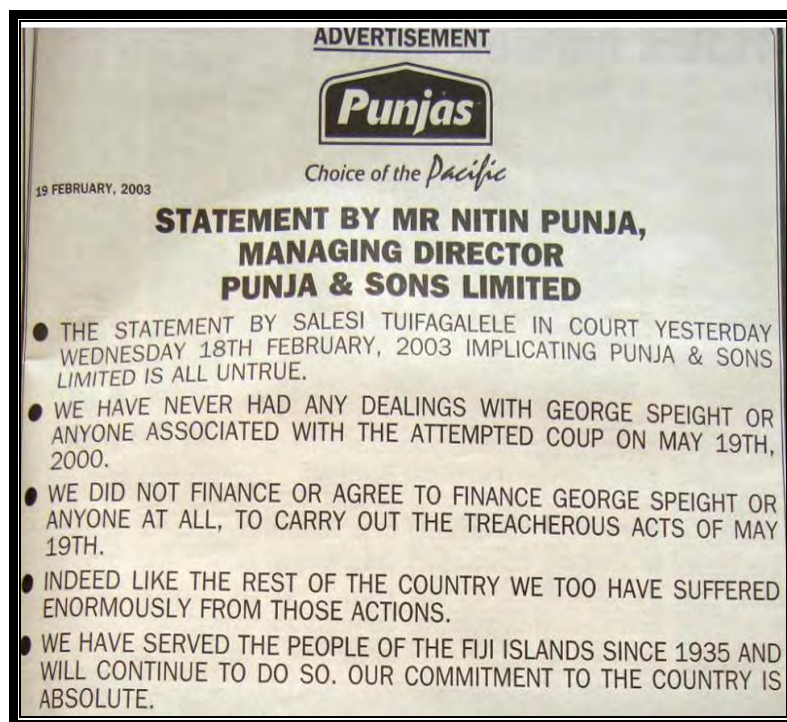


Figure 207 : Advertisement, Punja & Sons on allegations of providing financial assistance to George Speight for carrying out 2000 coup, (2003, February 20), p. 38 [1153]

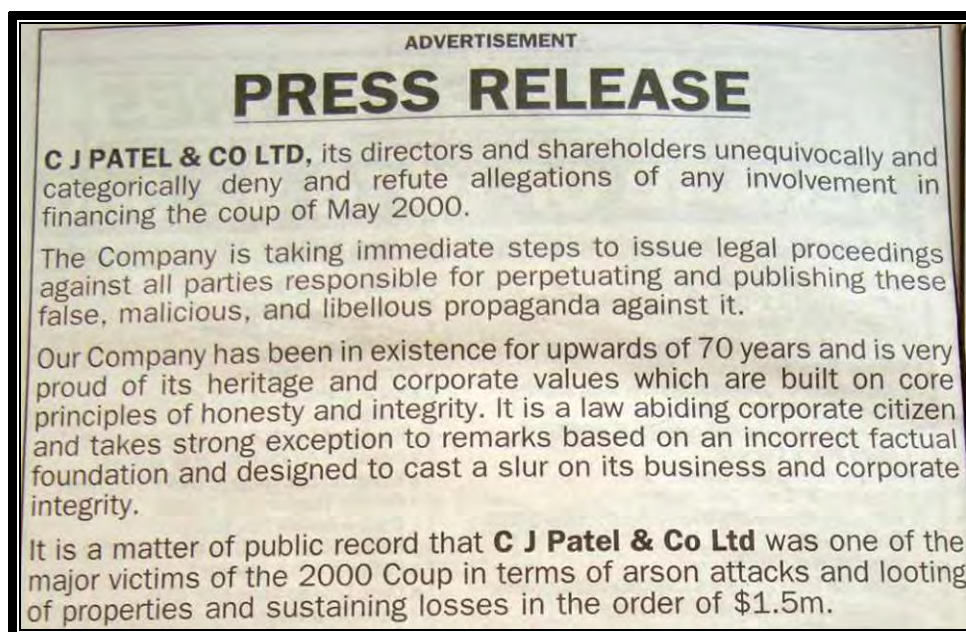


Figure 208 : Advertisement, C. J. Patel & Company Ltd on allegations of providing financial assistance to George Speight for carrying out 2000 coup, (2003, February 20), p. 39.[1154]

This is how FT defended the business community (Fig 209):

It was said in open court by a witness under oath that George Speight had told him CJ Patel Ltd and the Punja group were the financiers for his coup.

Of course, that doesn't stop Mahendra Chaudhry from believing every word of it. For more than two years he has been telling anyone who'll listen (and plenty who won't) that these and other business houses financed the Speight coup.

But in the end, people have heard it all before. What they have neither seen nor heard is Mahendra Chaudhry's evidence that there is some factual basis for allegations he makes only under the protection of parliamentary privilege.

In short, Mr Chaudhry should either put up or shut up.

Figure 209 : A question of credibility, Editorial, (2003, February 22), p. 6. [1157]

In response to this, Chaudhry wrote a long letter in letters to the editor column to explain what he had raised in Parliament about the investigations on those who are alleged to have helped with the coup and ousting of his government. The purpose of discussion on this particular issue (Punja and Rice licensing) plus the next one (Socialism and sharing wealth) is to provide a motive on why some sections of the Fiji business community may have wanted Chaudhry removed because he and his government's policies were seen to be detrimental. This issue is also taken on board to illustrate the similarity to Herman and Chomsky's (2008, p. 2) Propaganda Model to FT.

Chaudhry's full response to the editorial accusations is as follows and it provides some insights into the complex nature of Fiji politics (Fig 210):

Where is the abuse?

I AM surprised by the editorial (FT 22/2) lashing out at me for seeking a progress report from the police investigations into allegations surrounding the May 2000 coup.

The editorial, in typical FT fashion, accuses me of abusing parliamentary privilege in doing so. Where is the abuse? I rose to ask the Minister of Home

Affairs to inform the House on the status of on-going police investigation into allegations that certain prominent businessmen had financed the coup.

It was a legitimate question prompted by the revelation of a witness in the treason trial the day before. *The Fiji Times*, regrettably, cannot see it in that light.

Ever since May 19, 2000, if there has been one consistent, widely-held view, it is that Speight and his accomplices now serving time on Nukulau were the fall guys. The real instigators and financiers of the coup are still at large and need to be brought to justice.

From day one, Speight has been fairly insistent in claiming that he had prominent Indian support in what he had done. Why should one not believe him? He was also confident he had support from elements in the army and the police. He told me so and I have stated this in my statement to the police.

Speight's claims were backed by those made by Lt-Col Viliame Seruvakula, who played a key role in quashing the rebel forces. On the eve of his departure for New Zealand, Lt-Col Seruvakula gave several interviews in which he clearly claimed that there were others behind Speight.

Even if Speight's credibility was in doubt, can one question that of Col. Seruvakula? What motive

would he have to implicate those who are innocent?

Common sense would dictate that someone had to finance the coup. Speight was a bankrupt. He had no money. The hostage crisis was protracted over a period of two months. Hundreds of people who congregated in Parliament as supporters of the coup were fed and housed there day and night, the CRW soldiers who kept a 24-hour guard over us at gunpoint were paid and their families were looked after. Buses that carted coup supporters to and fro had to be paid for.

Seruvakula claimed he was offered close to a quarter of a million dollars in cash to support the coup. Money for all this had to come from somewhere.

It is well known that certain businessmen implicated in the coup were highly antagonistic towards the People's Coalition government. One of them was under investigation for transfer pricing on a big scale. A number of the others were being investigated for over-pricing of goods under price control, for corruption and for tax evasion. They had strong reasons for wanting the reformist government out.

What action has been taken against a garment manufacturer who has publicly admitted that he provided food and funds to finance certain activities in Parliament? The duty to investigate claims and charge wrongdoers lies with the police and the DPP's office. The entire nation is aware of the police laxity in dealing with the political crisis of 2000. And why not, when the country's chief police officer was himself seriously compromised?

What about the baker who openly provided regular supplies of bread to the hostage-takers and their cohorts? Both these people were constantly spotted in and around Parliament.

How much more evidence do the police need to lay charges?

The point is that the police have not tackled this task conscientiously. Now that there is a change of office at the top, perhaps we can look forward to greater commitment from the authorities in bringing to justice the behind-the-scenes perpetrators and supporters of the coup.

**MAHENDRA
P. CHAUDHRY**
Parliament Leader
Fiji Labour Party

Figure 210 : Mahendra Chaudhry, Where is the abuse? LTE, (2003, February 28), p. 6. [1160]

Chapter 23 delves deeper into the assertion that reflections of the Propaganda Model were noticeable in the way FT reacted to these perceived and real threats to the elite and the business community from the socialist policies of the new government.

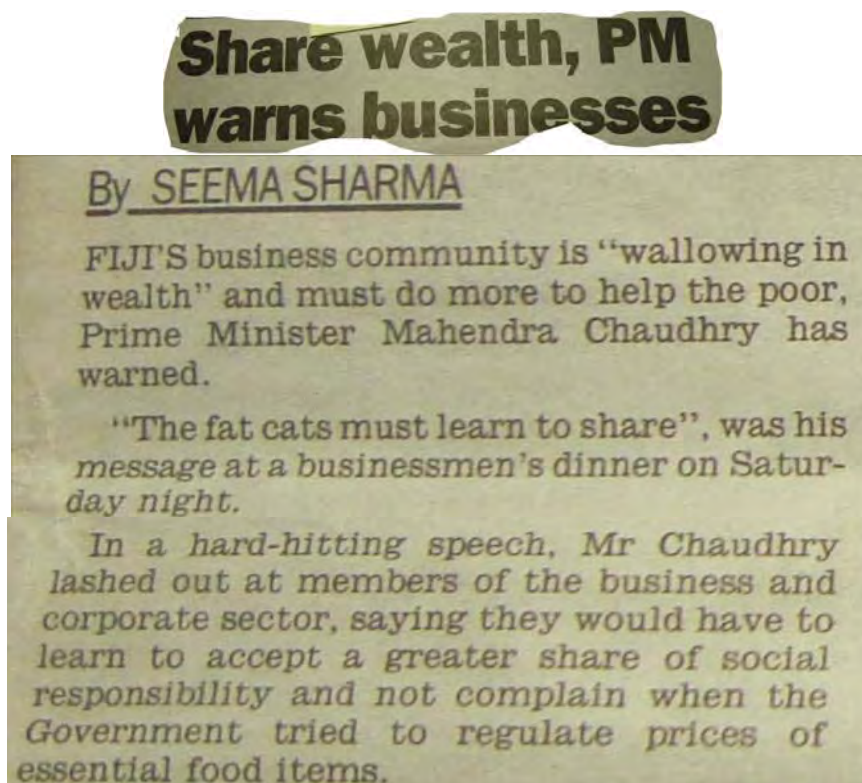
Chapter 23: Socialism and Sharing Wealth

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Socialism and sharing wealth	4	1	25	2	50	1	25

Table 20: Socialism and Sharing Wealth, May 1999 to May 2000.

Mahendra Chaudhry may have been all he has been accused of - rash, undiplomatic, arrogant, dictatorial, rude, and patronising etc, but he is also known to have a soft spot for his grassroots supporters, mostly poor farmers and poorer section of the rural population. They formed the bulk of the FLP support base. He was carving out a socialist policy to assist them and this was seen as a threat by the dominant rich business community who have been accused of being behind Speight and the nationalists to remove this advocate of socialism - the People's Coalition Government. It is for this reason this subject on socialism and sharing wealth (Table 20) was picked despite so few articles in this category. Except for what Chaudhry himself said, all the other responses were negative.

The implications of what Chaudhry said was seen as a threat to what Herman and Chomsky (2008) saw as the elite whose interest the media was there to serve (p. 2). This is what media and the elite saw as a threat to the business community (Fig 211):



“We want you to accept and appreciate the micro-economic framework within which government must develop its policies.”

Mr Chaudhry said more than 70 per cent of the national wealth was concentrated in the hands of just 10 per cent of the population.

“It is clear that government cannot leave its people to the mercy of unbridled capitalism,” he said.

“Restraints will have to be put in place to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities.

“Government will have to step in and regulate a minimum national wage to ensure greater social and economic equity.”

The Prime Minister vowed his government would take on infrastructure developments to open up vast areas of the countryside to provide clean and safe water and electricity to people in rural areas and to set up income-generating activities for people in villages and rural settlements so that they do not feel deprived of the benefits of modern living.

“We have allocated huge sums of capital works in the budget 2000 that will not only develop infrastructure but help provide much needed stimulus to an economy that has been stagnant for too long,” said Mr Chaudhry.

Figure 211 : Share wealth, PM warns businesses, (2000, January 17), p. 1. [578] [Seema Sharma]

From the above, it is quite evident why the business community in Fiji would wish to see the end of Chaudhry government. Changes contemplated with the taxation system, together with a minimum wages would have been very costly to the business community. This would have been especially for the locally owned Indian and Chinese businesses which were mostly non-unionised, indicating the failure of the union movement, which some suspect, were in the pockets of the big businesses. The basic minimum wages would have meant most of these non-unionised organisations would have been forced to pay a living wage that would be deemed above the poverty line, which in 2000 was determined to be \$120 per week, which most of the workers in the local retail businesses did not get.

These commendable comments about redistribution of wealth was taken negatively by FT which appeared to be conforming to Herman and Chomsky's (2008) Propaganda Model in supporting the elites and the business concerns that contributed to its advertising revenue. FT had very little to gain from the poorer sector of the community that Chaudhry was trying to assist through his socialist policies. FT effectively branded Chaudhry as an "unworthy" Robin Hood (Fig 212):

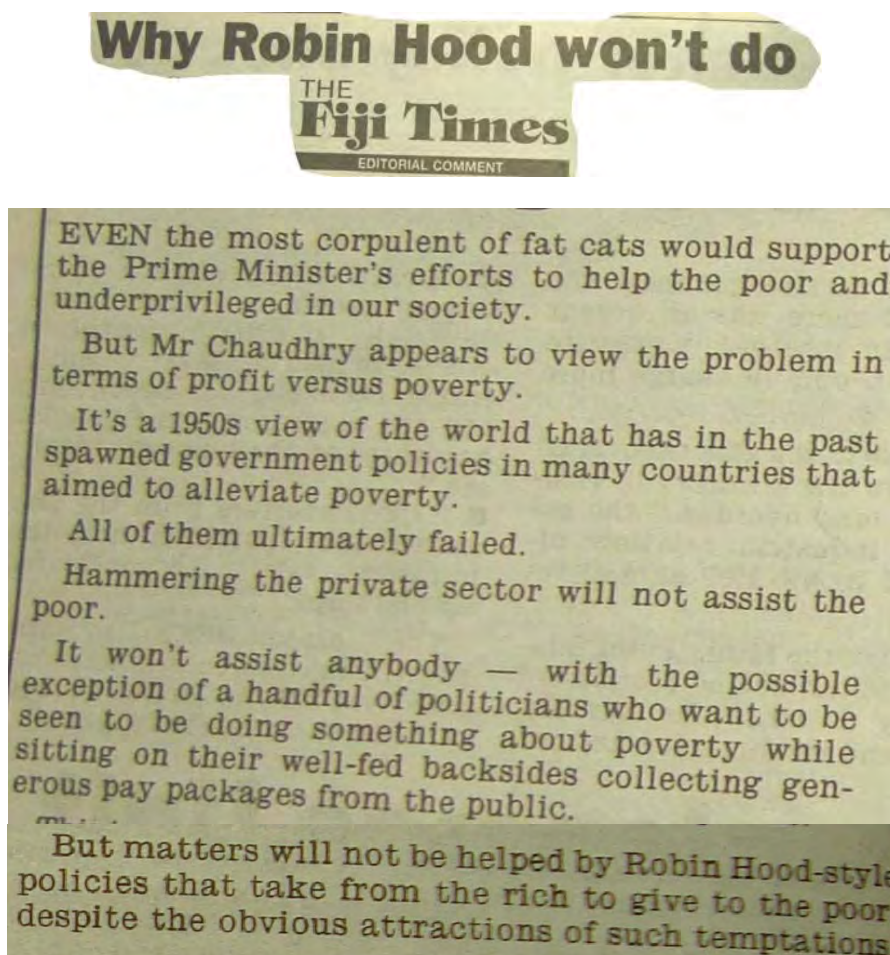


Figure 212 : Why Robin Hood won't do, Editorial, (2000, January 17), p. 6. [579]

It was not only FT which condemned Chaudhry's initiatives, but the opposition SVT also joined FT in criticising Chaudhry (Fig 213). In fact, while the intention of Chaudhry was to help all the poorer section of the population, which largely includes indigenous Fijians as well, the opposition turned it into a racial issue. They also classed Chaudhry's income redistribution initiatives as "stealing" from the business. They also dragged in the non-related land issue in the debate:

"Chaudhry is attacking the constitution and the democratic right of every Fiji citizen to own property and acquire wealth through the fruits of his or her hard work and skills. Today, Chaudhry wants to steal from the businessmen to give to others," the Opposition said.

The Opposition warned that Mr Chaudhry's next move was to take land from the Fijian landowners and give this to those hungry for land.

Mr Chaudhry was using the outdated and discredited socialism policy, the Opposition said, and if he was not aware of the disaster that followed, then he was indifferent to feelings and principles.

"Chaudhry is offering this bleak future for Fiji," the Opposition said.



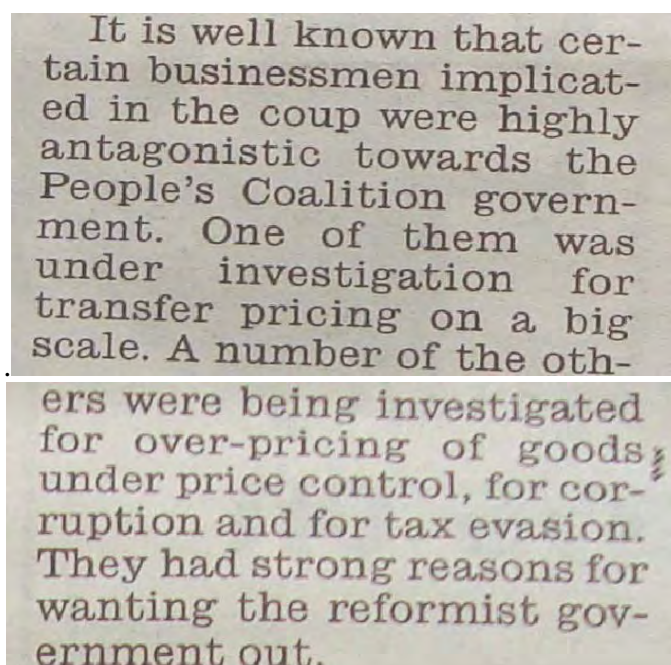
Figure 213 : Opposition hits out at Chaudhry move, (2000, January 18), p. 3. [580] [NBL]

What is surprising here is that Fijians always accused Indo-Fijians of being rich and greedy in not wanting to share their wealth. What in fact Chaudhry had proposed was to take from the business community, most of them Indo-Fijians, and redistribute to the poorer sections of the community, which largely comprises Fijians as well. MPC had implied some form of social democracy and FT spoke about failures of such a system in the 1950s. The Opposition statements appear to have stolen these thoughts from FT editorial by stating that those outdated and discredited policies were a disaster. Yet FT failed as the organ that should have informed people on a subject that had been raised, perhaps initiated by the media itself. Yet it neglected to appropriately analyse what it was that had failed. It also did not elaborate on the government statement that 13 of the 15 countries in the European Union were ruled by social democratic parties and such concept was used there. While FT condemned the government initiatives, it failed to discuss the underlying issues, and appeared to have been the mouthpiece of the rich business community. FT effectively degenerated as a vehicle of opposition to discredit the positive initiatives of the government which had spoken about huge innovative economic development plans that previous Fijian governments failed to deliver in the past three decades after Fiji's independence.

In fact what Nerone (1995) had said earlier fits here very appropriately where he said that the press and the media, which is capital driven “did not have as its aim to be a watchdog over the system of which it is a part. Watchdogs do not bite their owners” (p. 26). That may be a reason why FT showed support for the elite and the business community.

FT failed to fulfil the Libertarian or Free Press theory which was supposed to inform. (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 52). It also failed Siebert’s et al., (1963) Social Responsibility theory where the press should also promote democratic systems and enlighten the public with its analysis of stories they run (p. 74). FT neglected to inform what “failed” in 1950s and the status of social democratic systems elsewhere in the world.

Subsequent to the new election in 2001, Chaudhry, in a Parliamentary speech, spoke about the motives of businessmen wanting him out. What is strangely true is that an action under the military government by the Commerce Commission on at least three large Indo-Fijian (Gujarati) hardware companies in August 2010 found cases of overpricing, transfer pricing and other business irregularities that failed to see the light of the day during the democratic rule, with a partisan media. This had been raised by Chaudhry in 2003 (Fig 214):



It is well known that certain businessmen implicated in the coup were highly antagonistic towards the People's Coalition government. One of them was under investigation for transfer pricing on a big scale. A number of the others were being investigated for over-pricing of goods under price control, for corruption and for tax evasion. They had strong reasons for wanting the reformist government out.

Figure 214 : Mahendra Chaudhry, Where is the abuse? LTE, (2003, February 28), p. 6. [1160]

Chaudhry's statement above (Fig 214) and media's opposition to his socialist policies (Fig 212) add credence to Herman (1998, p. 191) who says that it was a myth that the press was a searcher and defender of truth. What he said was that all facets of news are structured by the influence and consensus of the elite to ensure a systematic propaganda, where media aids in defending the economic and political agenda of the privileged elite group that dominate the corporate sector. What he effectively said was that media serve and propagandise on behalf of those who control and finance them. In this instance, Herman and Chomsky's (2008) Propaganda Model fitted the behaviour of FT.

Perhaps, what Herman (1998) spoke about the media being firmly grounded in the market system is worth repeating here because of its neat fit into the editorial policies of FT which was bent on defending the business sector despite prevalence of great poverty, gross unequal distribution of wealth and a good initiative by the government to help the underprivileged in our society:

Profit-seeking businesses, owned by very wealthy people (or other companies); and they are funded largely by advertisers who are also profit-seeking entities, and who want their ads to appear in a supportive selling environment. (p. 192)

That is what FT had degenerated into: A First World media in a Third World country. It appears that because of FT's dislike for Chaudhry, it rushed to criticise a major policy initiative without adequately analysing it.

Chapter 24: Political personalities

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Political Personalities	25	2	8	11	44	12	48

Table 21: Political personalities, May 1999 to May 2000.

This subject of political personalities (Table 21) takes care of some of those people who featured prominently in the media during the Chaudhry government's one year rule. As usual, a large chunk of items fell in the "unfavourable" category, while an equally larger section also fell into the "neutral" category which meant they were relatively fairly covered. Some of those notable people are covered below:

24.1 Rabuka, Inoke Kubuabola and Sakeasi Butadroka

The 1987 coup

The purpose here in naming some of the characters is to provide a better understanding and appreciation of their significance elsewhere in this thesis.

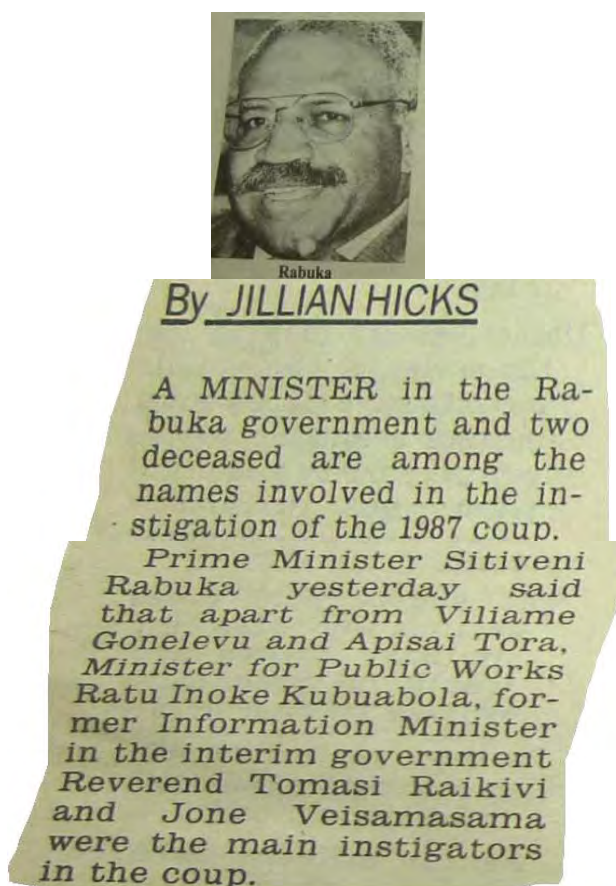


Figure 215 : Rabuka blames dead for coup, (1999, May 5), p. 3 [307] [Jillian Hicks]

Sitiveni Rabuka had named a dead politician, Jone Veisamasama, together with Apisai Tora and Ratu Inoke Kubuabola as some of those behind the 1987 coup (Fig 215). Note that the two latter-named politicians also featured prominently in FT articles during Chaudhry's one year rule: Tora as an aggrieved nationalist politician who was short-changed by MPC and Ratu Inoke as the Leader of Opposition after Rabuka resigned from Parliament.

The 2000 coup

Jone Dakuvula, who used to work in the SVT Opposition Office, was aware of the advance planning on the toppling of Chaudhry government. In an opinion piece written subsequent to the Speight putsch he had much to reveal on the actions of the characters who featured prominently in FT where they were granted ample exposure by an unquestioning and a partisan media. He explained the beginning of thoughts and plans to topple Chaudhry government began in May 1999 (Fig 216):

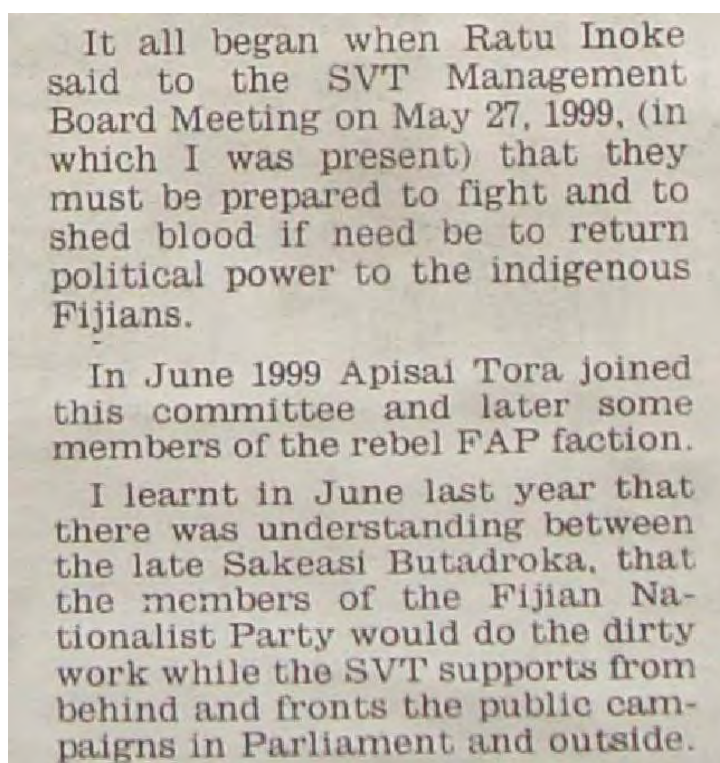


Figure 216 : Jone Dakuvula, What if Speight gives up: Opinion, (2000, May 25), p. 12. [1094]

24.2 Apisai Tora



Figure 217 : Apisai Tora, leading a protest march in Lautoka three weeks before George Speight putsch, Songs and chanting in the streets, (2000, April 29), p. 3. [765] [Matelita Ragogo]

The “mercurial chameleon of Fiji politics” is how Lal (2001, p. 12) saw Apisai Tora as. He has been known to the Fiji public as a shady character since he led protest march against Bavadra’s “Indian” government in 1987 that culminated in Rabuka’s coup. The photo above also shows he has been an expert in political agitation and causing instability under the sham of indigenous superiority and leadership. He has been known as a politician who had worked closely with the Indo-Fijian party, the NFP in the early 1980s but later switched his allegiance to Taukei nationalism. In the 1999 elections, he was the general secretary of an inappropriately named party, the Party of National Unity (PANU) and was aggrieved with MPC when the FLP stood a parallel candidate, Pradhuman Raniga against their coalition partner candidate in which Tora lost. It was seen as a devious means by which Chaudhry was trying to remove Tora. The least Tora expected was to be given a Senate seat which he was denied. This was another undoing of Chaudhry that carved Fiji’s unfortunate and sad political landscape. His inability to build bridges with former political foes and poor interpersonal skills saw Tora taking a road that led to the rape of democracy in Fiji. Chaudhry’s vindictiveness ran beyond personal level to business connection as well.

The final straw was The Wire Company of Fiji, a company owned by Tora which was involved in making wire fences, was denied the takeover by Vinod Patel and Company to rescue it from bankruptcy. Chaudhry used his Public Enterprise Minister Anoop Kumar to deny this takeover during his rule. This really prompted Tora to take part in activities to oust Chaudhry prematurely through less than legal means. It was the Tora-led march on 19 May, 2000 that culminated in a rowdy crowd rushing to the Parliament

to provide a convenient human shield for the George Speight putsch. Chaudhry's sidelining and persecution of Tora proved very costly, and his inability to build bridges has been one of the reasons for his fall.

24.3 Simione Kaitani



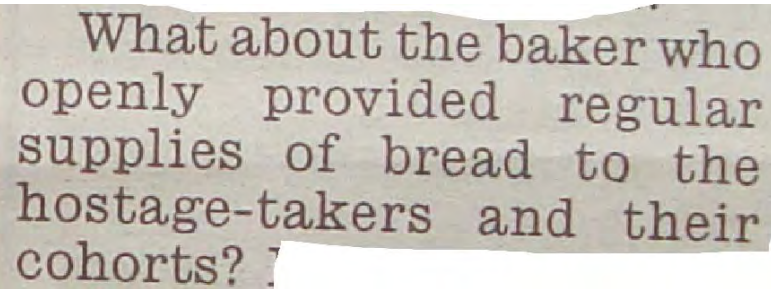
Figure 218 : Coup Photo: Lomaiviti parliamentarian Simione Kaitani with well-wishers and a rebel trooper, right, who stormed Parliament on Friday, (2000, May 25), p. 11. [1093]

From the preferential treatment he got from FT, one would assume Kaitani must have had relatives or reporters from his province in the newsroom who gave him much prominence in giving news items and gaining exposure that the government found difficult to obtain. While being an Independent MP, with no political party, he spoke almost like the Leader of Opposition in matters relating to the new government.

His support for destabilising democracy is evident from the above photo and his acceptance as Speight's illegal Minister of Information. He went in to join Qarase's SDL party and was rewarded with Ministry of Information portfolio in February 2003, despite publicly admitting to have committed sedition in a *Close Up* programme in Fiji Television with the author of this thesis. This will be seen later in Chapter 27.

24.4 Mere Samisoni

Mere Samisoni is the Hot Bread Kitchen Company baker and owner that Chaudhry mentioned in his letter below (Fig 219 and earlier in Fig 210) in reply to *The Fiji Times* editorial ("A question of credibility", Fig 209):



What about the baker who
openly provided regular
supplies of bread to the
hostage-takers and their
cohorts? .

Figure 219 : Mahendra Chaudhry, Where is the abuse? LTE, (2003, February 28), p. 6. [1160]

She was sympathetic towards the nationalist elements and later went on to become a strong supporter and an SDL Member of Parliament, with strong favour for affirmative action and indigenous superiority. She used to be a political commentator during Chaudhry's rule and wrote some feature articles, with analysis of MPC government. As earlier stated, she also echoed that the problems that the new government was facing were home-grown within the FLP rather than on external factors.

She also concluded that the big win for the FLP was not so much their acceptance by the voters, but it was a rejection of Rabuka's SVT government (Fig 220). She may have been correct here, but her comment on the tea lady affair reeked of hypocrisy and double standards

One fact that the Prime Minister needs to face up to however, is that his recent electoral victory was not so much an endorsement of the him and his party, as it was a rejection of the SVT.

Mr Chaudhry's Government is facing some prickly issues at the moment.

Bad press will not be help in extracting itself and the country from those quandaries, but a strong case could be made that Mr Chaudhry and the FLP bear partial or even major responsibility for the current status quo in some of those matters.

Figure 220 : Mere Samisoni, PM's laments nothing new for Fiji's leaders, *Opinion*, (1999, October 31), p. 11. [458]

She speaks about a moral code of conduct, sexual addiction and Christian integrity (Fig 221). She sounds as much a hypocrite as those Methodist Church padres and chiefs who could forgive Rabuka for having a child out of wedlock with Margaret Wise, and unquestionably tolerate him with numerous unethical (adulterous) sexual affairs with other women, but seek answers from an alleged sighting of Chaudhry sitting with Asha Lakhan. One may ask: What Christian integrity was Samisoni talking about, when the Christians were involved in racial hatred and hate speeches from pulpits? As the chairperson of the Women's Wing of SVT Party, the least she could have done was to question Rabuka why he was treating women as mere chattels and sexual objects?

Fiji has very serious problems, in the highest office of this land, in national security, mismanagement, moral code of conduct, and sexual and political addiction. These are not only signs of inefficiency and wastage but their very “core” violates our Christian integrity.
 MERE TUISALALO
 SAMISONI
 Suva.

Figure 221 : Mere Samisoni, Tea lady saga, LTE, (1999, December 14), p. 6. [518]

24.5 Laisenia Qarase

Qarase was a Senator when the Speight putsch took place and Frank Bainimarama had picked him up as the interim Prime Minister because he saw Qarase as a “clean” apolitical figure. Little did Bainimarama realise that after tasting power, Qarase would go along to form a political party, lead a government and support the nationalist elements to “Fijianise” Fiji. His racist stance could be deduced from his days as a Senator. He generally indulged in race-tainted speeches and lamented why MPC was helping only Indo-Fijian cane farmers when in fact there already existed many other avenues of assisting Fijians through affirmative action programmes (Fig 222). While he did speak about racial parity, when he gained office, he took it to such a highly skewed level, that it was equivalent to ethnic cleansing.

On the claim that Fijians and Rotumans were not adequately represented on statutory boards, Senator Qarase said their representation should reflect the fact that they comprise 51 per cent of the population.

He added that indigenous Fijians allocation of \$13.238 million was almost nothing compared to the \$20 million allocated for displaced sugarcane farmers.

Figure 222 : Qarase hits back at State, (2000, March 14), p. 3. [648] [NBL]

24.6 Rabuka versus Mara

In his book, *Rabuka on Fiji* by Central Queensland University lecturer John Sharpham, Rabuka claimed that Ratu Mara knew about the 1987 coup and they had met before the event. Ratu Mara denied this. In his first book, *No other way*, Rabuka claimed he was alone in the 1987 coup. With this revelation, Rabuka appears to live up to his reputation of being consistent in being inconsistent.

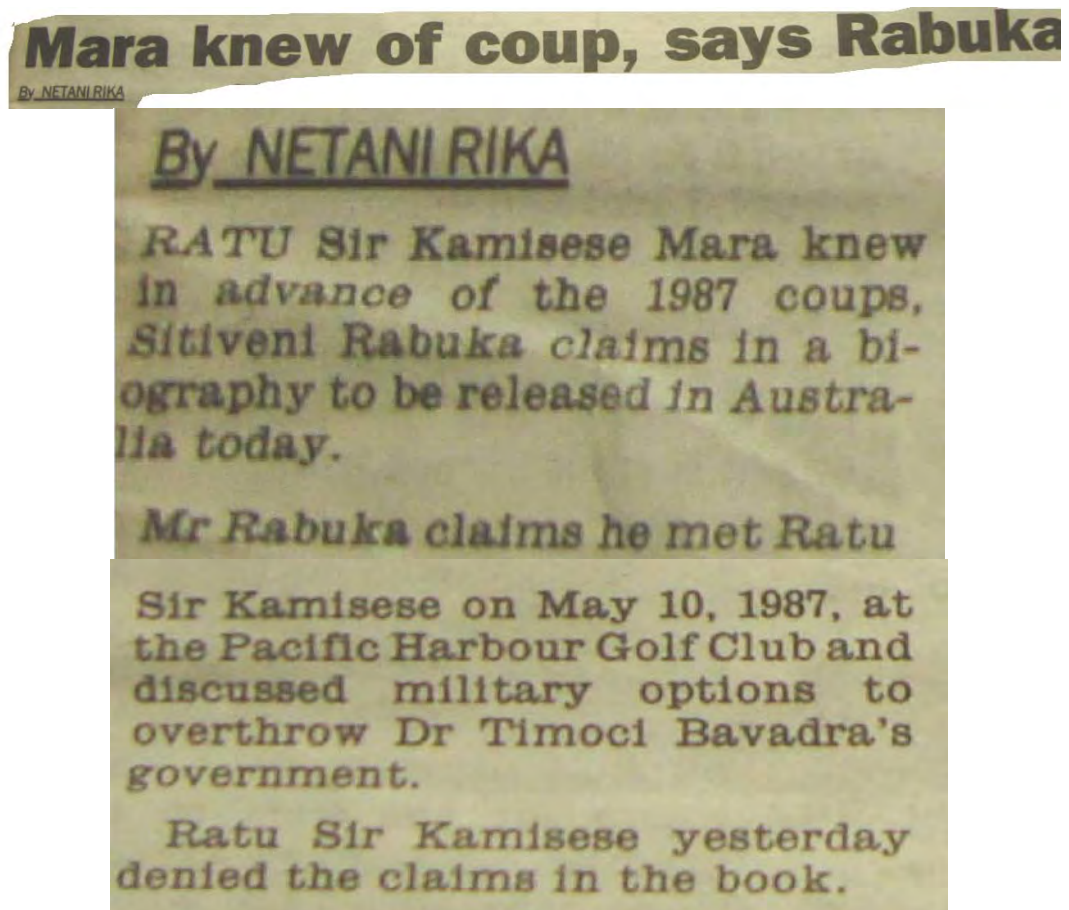


Figure 223 : Mara knew of coup, says Rabuka, (2000, March 14), p. 1. [647] [Netani Rika]

When a news item was written on Rabuka's book by Netani Rika, something had to be mentioned about Indo-Fijians. A veiled warning was highlighted that Indian dominance, which referred to the Chaudhry government, would lead to agitation by the Fijians (Fig 224):

By NETANI RIKA

FORMER Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka hopes Indians will migrate in large numbers.

"We tighten the controls, then Fiji is no longer attractive to the Indian settler as it has been in the last 120 years," he says in his new biography.

Mr Rabuka said migration would reduce Indians to "manageable" levels.

And he suggested that Indian dominance of the country would lead to Fijian intolerance.

Figure 224 : Migration the key: Rabuka, (March 15), p. 3. [649] [Netani Rika]

Chapter 25: Zimbabwe Land Problems

ISSUES COVERED	Tot	FAV	Per Cent	UNFAV	Per Cent	NEUTRAL	Per Cent
Zimbabwe Land Problems	21	0	0	21	100	0	0

Table 22: Zimbabwe land problems, May 1999 to May 2000.

The Zimbabwe land problem is an international issue, but it has been consistently highlighted in FT as if it was a local one. It appears FT consistently but erroneously tried to juxtapose the supposed land-grab and other perceived and real injustices committed by the white farmers in Zimbabwe and the ensuing “pay back” by the blacks of Zimbabwe, to Fiji’s Indians over the Fijian problem. What is coincidental is that such land-grab issues, threats of violence and racial agitation were very similar to Fiji’s. The highlighting of those problems in a systematic way, with photos of violence, raises issues of media ethics, which some may argue, bordered on irresponsibility. There were other issues happening around the world: in India, in Europe, in America and in Africa in general as well. But why was this Zimbabwe land issue so important to FT? What relevance did the continued highlighting have with Fiji? With some of the headlines, it was difficult to decipher whether they referred to Fiji or Zimbabwe. Naidu (2007) also noticed this resemblance of violence:

On that fateful day of the putsch, indigenous Fijian youths rampaged through Suva looting, burning and trashing shops belonging to Indo-Fijians and others. Harassment of rural Indo-Fijian communities, home invasions, thefts of household items, farm implements, produce and animals continued for weeks without effective police response. *These incidents were reminiscent of scenes of Mugabe’s land appropriation in Zimbabwe publicised previously in the local media.* (p. 30)

One or two reports may have sufficed. But continual highlighting did nothing but raised the issue of the responsibility of a first world media in a third world nation, dwelling on unrelated international news of land and racial conflicts. What is a matter of concern is that this was done in Fiji which was already in the midst of similar land and racial conflicts. The headline below (Fig 225), with a provocative photo of Robert Mugabe appeared on the day George Speight took over Parliament:



Figure 225: Violence threatens poll, (2000, May 19), p. 14. [820]

In a consistent manner, a month before the Speight putsch, FT commenced highlighting Zimbabwe land problems. The headlines and photos are self-explanatory and bore close similarity to the situation in Fiji. They are presented with a view to informing the readers of the possible effects of such provocative news of conflict in a country embroiled in similar conflicts. (Figures 226-243):



Figure 226 : 'Zimbabwean land for Zimbabweans,' (2000, April 15), p. 14. [738]



Figure 227: White farmer shot dead, (2000, April 17), p. 10. [739]



Figure 228: Ranchers run off land, (2000, April 20), p. 12. [750]



Figure 229 : Britain ready for asylum seekers, (2000, April 19), p. 10. [745]



Figure 230 : Mugabe's rise from peasant to president, (2000, April 20), p. 7. [749]



Figure 231 : Photo: Strained relationship... the body of slain Zimbabwean Martin Olds, is photographed where he died, (2000, April 20), p. 12. [750]



Figure 232 : Violence rises amid talks, (2000, April 27), p. 12. [760]

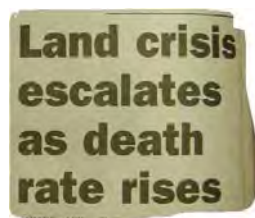


Figure 233: Land crisis escalates as death rate rises, (2000, April 28), p. 10. [761]



Figure 234 : Fresh wave of attacks, (2000, May 3), p. 10. [784]



Figure 235; Zimbabwe violence escalates, (2000, May 6), p. 18. [792]



Figure 236 : Zimbabwe farmer bashed up, (2000, May 9), p. 10. [796]



Figure 237 : Photo: Turmoil... war veterans lead Zimbabweans on the march through Harare, (2000, May 6), p. 18. [792]

The juxtaposition of the picture above (Fig 237) and the one below (Fig 238) is self explanatory. There is a certain similarity of the Tora march in Lautoka (below) and the one in Zimbabwe (above):



Figure 238 : Protesters want Fijian rights maintained, Songs and chanting in the streets, (2000, April 29), p. 3. [765] [Matelita Ragogo]



Figure 239 : Mugabe faces challenge, (2000, May 8), p. 18. [792]



Figure 240 : Photo: We shall not be moved...Zimbabweans demonstrate in favour of Mugabe's land reforms, (2000, May 8), p. 10. [794]



Figure 241 : Students run riot in Harare, (2000, May 12), p. 12. [799]



Figure 242 : Plan for bloody coup, (2000, May 15), p. 11. [806]



Figure 243 : Fear grips all of Zimbabwe, (2000, May 15), p. 11. [815]

Chapter 26: The racial composition of the news team

Number of Fijian, Part-Fijian and ‘Other’ reporters	23 (76.7 per cent)
Number of Indo-Fijian reporters	7 (23.3 per cent)
Total Number	30 (100 per cent)

Table 23: Racial composition of the news room, May 1999 to May 2000

What follows here is a list of the newsroom team that has been “constructed” from the data analysis and summarised in Table 23. That is not an exhaustive list of FT staff or the newsroom personnel between May 1999 and May 2000. But this is a list of all those who featured in stories used for analysis over a one year period. Initially when the analysis commenced, there was no intention of conducting any demarcation by racial composition of the news team. Nevertheless, this subject has been covered in the literature review section where commentators did agree that the racial makeup and the cultural and *vanua* (traditional origin) links do affect the output of the news coverage.

Robie (2001b) had cited the Fairfax correspondent Michael Field who had observed that race was creeping into newsrooms where reporting and editorial stances were frequently based on the journalists’ race and own political views (p. 8). Former *Fiji’s Daily Post* editor (now New Zealand-based) Jale Moala (2001) had observed that politics in the region was so often mixed with issues like cultural loyalties that it could become difficult for reporters to maintain impartiality and direction, especially if they happened to come from the same racial or cultural group as those reported on (p. 125). Kiran (2005) had also noted that environmental factors encourage an atmosphere of ethnocentrism and racial feeling within journalism (p. 81). Gaunder (2006) also reported the race factor as a fact of life during her review of FT. She reported that it does play a part in influencing what comes out in the media (p. 8).

Devi and Chand (2008) reported that the very free press which in the West would champion democracy and development could champion anti democratic forces in the Pacific. This was through the pressures of an intricate set of communal relationships of blood, custom and language (p. 265). As others have reported, this appeared to have been the case with FT where the racial composition of the newsroom affected the output in the newspaper. Gounder (2006) also revealed that those reporting on the Speight putsch were mostly Fijian journalists and they reported being influenced by their social and cultural affiliations (p. 75).

This trend could not be discounted in the content analysis. In the course of the analysis of the sample selected, it stared starkly that almost 95 per cent of the news coverage that had bylines were covered by non-Indo-Fijians, which means they were either Fijians, Part Fijian or ‘Others’ who do not fall in the earlier categories. In many instances, Fijian reporters covered news in villages and provincial councils, held in native language with much heated and emotional talk of racial hatred and agitation. While the Indo-Fijian reporters constituted some 23 per cent of the newsroom team in absolute terms, their stories were few and far in-between. In fact at least four of them had only one story each in the entire coverage of one year that was in the sample, with a byline. The reason for this could be attributed to the fact that they were either commissioned to do stories relating to other issues, those of non-political in nature that were not part of our sample, or did stories which appeared without bylines. The other possible reason could be that any positive reference in their stories were either ‘canned’ by the gatekeepers or went without any byline.

What also stood out starkly was that some obvious “positive” or “favourable” stories were done by Indo-Fijian reporters, such as the coverage of the first anniversary of the government, Housing Authority clarifications and those relating to political and racial agitators. These stories were done by either Bernadette Hussain or Sudesh Kissun. Lists below summarise in alphabetical order, the names of newsroom personnel by race:

26.1 Fijian, Part-Fijian and ‘others’ in the news team:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Akanisi Motofaga | 13. Margaret Wise |
| 2. Arthur McCutchan | 14. Matelita Ragogo |
| 3. Charles Chambers | 15. Netani Rika |
| 4. Davila Waqausa | 16. Paul Yavala |
| 5. Dionesia Taburegudi | 17. Rosemary Baleiverata |
| 6. Frederica Delailomaloma | 18. Ruci Mafi |
| 7. Irene Manuelli | 19. Russell Hunter |
| 8. Jillian Hicks | 20. Sainimili Lewa |
| 9. Jo Makaba | 21. Samisoni Kakaivalu |
| 10. John Kamea | 22. Sarafina Silatoga |
| 11. Josua Tuwere | 23. Verenaisi Raicola |
| 12. Luisa Tora | |

26.2 Names of Indo-Fijian reporters in the news team:

1. Anokh Kumar (one story only)
2. Avinesh Gopal
3. Bernadette Hussain (one story)
4. Dharmend Prasad (one story only)
5. Seema Sharma (one story only)
6. Shobna Chandra
7. Sudesh Kissun

PART III: DISCUSSION

Chapter 27: Comparison with news coverage by FT in Qarase government

The objective here is to briefly present some issues that arose during Laisenia Qarase's government and make comparisons with how FT covered news of similar nature during Chaudhry's government. Three such issues are presented with a view to determining the neutral or partisan stance of FT during a "Fijian" government as compared with MPC's "Indian" government.

27.1 Appointment of a disbarred lawyer as the chief legal advisor of Qarase government

The story here is about a clean and transparent government, which subject used to appear frequently in FT during Chaudhry's rule in relation to matters small and large. It was a known fact that Qoriniasi Bale, a well known Fijian lawyer was "disbarred" or taken off the register of the Fiji Law Society for a very serious fraud for which lawyers in more accountable democracies are barred from practising for life. The issue is not merely about practising law, but being appointed by the government as its chief legal advisor and being the first legal man of the country, occupying one of the strongest portfolios in the whole cabinet. Would New Zealand or Australia allow that to happen in their countries?

The first story below shows that FT merely reported the statement issued by Qarase government without any probe when they used to be very active during Chaudhry rule. The appointment of Rajendra Chaudhry, the tea lady issue, scandalising Dr Ganesh Chand's and Chaudhry's house and conflict with Baba created media frenzy where reporters dug into issues in advance to project a negative picture of the government. In this instance FT was supposed to have known about the background of Bale which was only revealed when others investigated into his past. FT failed miserably in not being proactive as it was in 2000 when during MPC's rule, it sniffed out "scandals" in advance to expose them gleefully in the public.

One wonders, where were Margaret Wise and all those other Fijian reporters who were ever present in the provincial council or Taukei movement meetings to report on their activities. They reported on a \$385 tint of Chaudhry's official car on the first page, and for rugs and furniture in Chaudhry's ministers' offices. Yet, they failed to inform Fiji in the first instance that Qarase was appointing as his Chief Legal advisor a person who

had a tainted past with a fraud of trust funds involving some \$200,000. What is also intriguing about FT is that while the issue of Tupeni Baba slating Chaudhry was repeatedly published on some ten occasions, in this crucial matter, only three stories in total were reported. Was FT trying to protect and give support to a lawyer with a shady past being responsible for legal advice to Qarase government, just because he happened to be a “Fijian”? Should not FT have been more responsible in raising this issue in its editorial, as they had done on numerous occasions during supposed dereliction of duties by the Chaudhry government on smaller and insignificant issues? Why the silence now? With the benefit of hindsight, one of the major causes of the 2006 government takeover has been shown to be the contentious bills initiated by somebody who should have been stopped from being the Attorney General in the first place. The Qoliqoli Bill and the wrongly-named Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill, had divided the nation. The latter was intended to release the traitorous perpetrators from jail. This, among others, was the reason given why Fiji was taken over by the military on December 5, 2006. The question that arises is, if the media was more responsible and questioning, especially FT, as they were during Chaudhry rule, could Fiji have been spared from such an Attorney General and the resulting action by the military? The following stories (Figs 244-246) paint a picture of FT which is tantamount to dereliction of media duties and responsibilities of a supposedly vigilant press in a Third World country.



Figure 244 : Bale is new A-G, (2001, September 20), p. 4. [1128] [NBL]

Parties fry Bale over unclean record

THE Government has come under fire for appointing Qoriniasi Bale as Attorney-General.

Mr Bale was struck off the lawyers' roll in 1997 after the Fiji Law Society disciplinary committee found him guilty of misconduct and misuse of trust funds totalling \$50,000.

National Federation Party leader Attar Singh said a person with a blemished record could not be expected to be the chief legal adviser to the Government.

"The record of the man speaks for itself," he said.

Labour Party spokesman

Pratap Chand said Mr Bale was not the person to set the standards for the legal fraternity, adding the credibility of the SDL was at stake.

Dodonu ni Taukei Party leader Doctor Fereti Dewa said if the Government had wanted a Fijian to be appointed to the position, there were a lot of Fijian lawyers.

"There may be other legal people with clean records. Someone with an unblemished record is preferable," he said.

Fiji Trades Union Congress secretary Felix Anthony said the appointment was inappropriate.

Citizens Constitutional Forum director Akuila Yabaki said the onus was now on Mr Bale to rise above doubts on matters of principle and that the expectation from him would be very high.

"This appointment could well be a reward to a non-MP for what was in fact a partial success in the CCF case against the President last June," he said.

Mr Bale and his associate were ordered to pay the Fiji Law Society costs in 1997. Prior to that, Mr Bale served a two-year suspension for misconduct and misuse of \$220,000 in trust funds.

Figure 245: Parties fry Bale over unclean record, (2001, September 21), p. 3. [1130][NBL]

Under-fire minister respects criticisms

DESPITE criticisms from political parties about the appointment of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Qoroniasi Bale will not be moved although he respects the criticisms.

Because, according to Mr Bale, he did not apply for the position but was invited by Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase to take up the portfolio.

"I respect more the confidence which Mr Qarase has reposed in me and my ability to serve the nation as the Government's principal legal adviser.

"I doubt that Mr Qarase would have invited me to serve in this capacity if he considered that I am unworthy of the position," said Mr Bale.

He added: "I did not apply for the position. As far as the criticisms are concerned, as a senior lawyer I respected and have fully complied with the sanction (suspension and not deregistration as claimed by *The Fiji Times*) imposed against me in accordance with the rules of the Fiji Law."

He said he was well aware that criticisms would be made against his appointment.

Figure 246: Under-fire minister respects criticisms, (2001, September 22), p. 3. [1131] [NBL]

27.2 Removal of Peter Ridgway

Peter Ridgway, Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), was seen as a smart lawyer who was instrumental in leading the prosecution of treason cases of people associated with Qarase's government. He was on close following the associates of SDL who were involved in Speight's putsch. The unceremonious method in which his dismissal from Fiji was executed reeked of improper motives that were seen by everybody except FT.

Naidu (2007) observed this trend of Qarase government:

There was a reluctance to support investigation and prosecution of those implicated in the [George Speight] putsch and [Queen Elizabeth Barrack] mutiny. The government blocked the renewal of the contract of Australian prosecutor, Peter Ridgway, who has been successful in obtaining convictions of several putsch supporters. (p. 31)

It appears the paper was inconsistent with its editorial comments on important issues affecting the country. When the People's Coalition government was in power, the Acting DPP then was Kenneth Wilkinson who was frustrated by the lack of expertise in

DPP's office and requested Chaudhry government for assistance in upgrading the skills within DPP's office. Then (November, 1999) FT had written a commendable editorial to support Wilkinson in up-skilling DPP's Office, as is evident by the following (Fig 247):

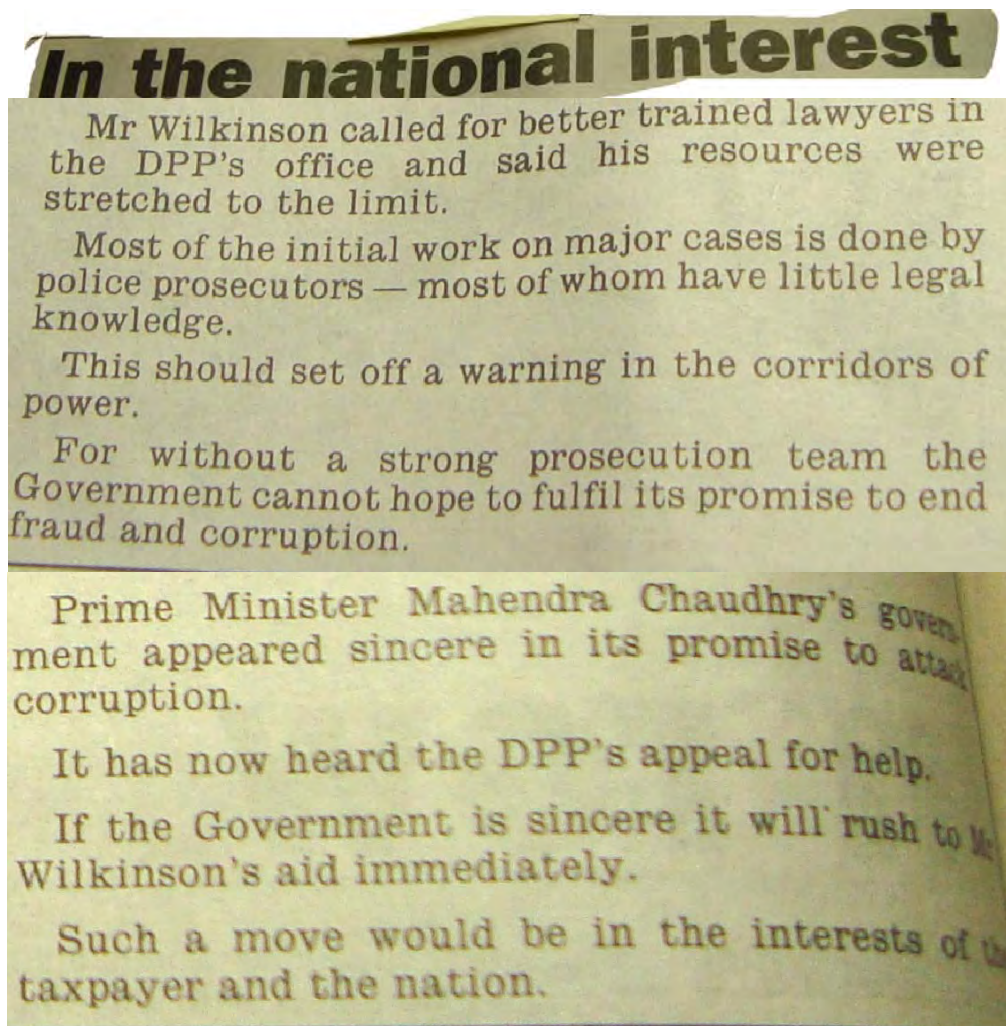


Figure 247 : In the national interest, Editorial, (1999, November 4), p. 6. [463]

However, when Ridgway was unceremoniously sent away despite so much protest and reservation by all concerned, FT was not forthcoming with any editorial comments despite covering stories on this issue. There were administrative issues: a letter signed by a junior officer and lack of answers. Objections were raised and ulterior motives were hinted, according to the news items covered below.

Get out, Ridgway told

By IMRAN ALI

FORMER Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions Peter Ridgway has been ordered to leave the country immediately.

Leader of the Opposition Mahendra Chaudhry said the expatri-

ate lawyer was not a criminal to be ordered out of the country.

"Obviously it was a case of victimisation. The Government is not happy with the successful prosecutions he has conducted so it wants him out.

"The motive behind not granting Mr Ridgway an extension was to weaken the DPP's Office. It's a disgusting and uncivilised way of dealing with such matters," Mr Chaudhry said.

The Pacific Centre for Public Integrity has condemned the Government for interference in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

"All law abiding citizens should view this refusal of legal assistance to the Office of the DPP as

very suspicious, considering the coup cases before the courts and the DPP's vocal opposition to the Government's Reconciliation Bill," centre director Angie Hefernan said.

She said with more high profile coup-related cases to go before the courts, NGOs were concerned there would be moves to undermine and interfere with the independence of the DPP's Office.

Virisila Buadromo, of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, said it was obvious the DPP's Office lacked legal expertise to prosecute coup-related cases.

No comments could be obtained from Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, who was in Japan or his chief executive Jioji Kotobalavu.

Figure 248 : Get out, Ridgway told, (2005, June 22), p. 2. [281] [Imran Ali]

Mr Ridgway was ordered to leave the country immediately after Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase did not grant a request to extend his contract for two months so he could complete cases he had been working on.

United People's Party leader Mick Beddoes said the Government's treatment of Mr Ridgway showed scant regard for his

four years of dedication in helping Fiji.

He said it was clear for all to see that Mr Ridgway's success in catching the "crooks" had disappointed the Government to the point that "they simply could not contain themselves when faced with the opportunity to embarrass (Mr Ridgway) through the rather small and insignificant request

for a few months extension to complete work — something many government departments simply can't do".

Mr Beddoes said there should be no doubt in anyone's mind that the unfinished cases Mr Ridgway wanted to complete, which included the prosecution of two very prominent figures, would now gather dust.

Figure 249: Nothing sinister in sending away prosecutor: Bale, (2005, June 23), p. 3. [280][Imran Ali]

However, early this week Mr Ridgway was ordered by the department to leave within 24 hours. Investigations are under way to determine who signed the expulsion notice to Mr Ridgway. It is alleged a junior officer signed the letter ordering Mr Ridgway to leave the country.

Figure 250: Expulsion won't harm relations, (2005, June 25), p. 3. [283] [NBL]

Police hope DPP can handle coup cases

"Claims and counterclaims about our office do not help our officers concentrate on their demanding case load."

Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes said he had to rely on the DPP's Office to carry on from where Mr Ridgway left.

"I have to place my confidence in the DPP to be sure that things are in place so that prosecution can continue and I do have every confidence in the director."

"There's no denying that Mr Ridgway was an extremely capable and committed prosecutor who had a very intimate knowledge of the coup files. "And I hope that we can proceed in a similar way that we had in the past."

"It will take someone, some effort to get up to speed to the details of the case and it's not beyond human ability."

"I know the (DPP) has very competent prosecutors in his office and while we regret to see Mr Ridgway departing, I rely on the DPP to ensure that we proceed as we have in the past."

Mr Hughes said overall, they had excellent relations with the DPP's Office.

THE FIJI TIMES — FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 2005 3

Figure 251 : Police hope DPP can handle coup cases, (2005, June 24), p. 3. [282] [Imran Ali]

What is evident from the above is that when People's Coalition Government was in power from mid 1999 to 2000, *The Fiji Times* used to vigorously condemn government inefficiencies and lack of answers and used to ridicule the government, as analysed in the previous Chapters.

FT had realised the lack of expertise in DPP's office as far back as 1999. Things had not changed, people had expressed their reservations including David Pickering, Mahendra Chaudhry, the Commissioner of Police and civil societies, yet FT remained silent. In minor issues during People's Coalition rule, FT would give an opinion through an editorial. However in this very crucial matter where Qarase had a vested interest in not renewing Ridgway's permit, FT remained silent while in the case of the Hunter and Clark permit issues, it had a field day against Chaudhry and his government. In this issue of crucial importance to the nation's justice system, FT had nothing to say to Qarase. Through its lack of response and a stand against such an extreme breach of good governance, the newspaper compromised its independence, balance and neutrality. It is media's dereliction of its responsibilities like this that this author was prompted to make a stand that if media had played its role as diligently during Qarase rule as it did during Chaudhry's, the country may have escaped the fate of 2006 military takeover (Singh, 2009), which is further elaborated in the next section.

27.3 Fiji TV's *Close Up* and Kaitani's sedition swept under the media carpet

Like this author's removal by Chaudhry from the Radio Fiji programme (Chapter 21), this is another occasion when I was directly involved. In 2003, I replied to Kaitani's call for Chaudhry to be charged with sedition for what he (MPC) had said in India on the plight of Indo-Fijians under Qarase regime. I wrote a letter to editor and called for Kaitani to be charged instead (Singh, 2003, January 14). In return he challenged me to a panel discussion on *Close-Up* current affairs programme on Fiji TV, hosted by Riyaz Saiyed Khaiyum, now CEO of Fiji Broadcasting Commission Ltd and former journalist with TVNZ's *Asia Down Under* in Auckland (Khaiyum, 2003). In that programme I went armed with Larry Thomas's video production, *A race for rights* which showed Kaitani delivering a racially inciteful speech to a group of Fijians before the protest march that resulted in the takeover of the Chaudhry government (Thomas, 2002). When asked after seeing the footage, Kaitani clearly admitted to having committed sedition. Then he was Qarase's Assistant Minister for Information. In many other democracies, such a statement would have caused major media interest and the resignation of the politician concerned.

Comparatively anything even remotely similar in Chaudhry government usually caused huge media hype in FT newsroom. But in this instance, FT ignored the issue. In the editorial below, FT on October 6, 1999 (Fig 252), called for Bune to resign for supposedly misusing government funds, which he later justified. FT took all opportunities to lecture Chaudhry on good governance.



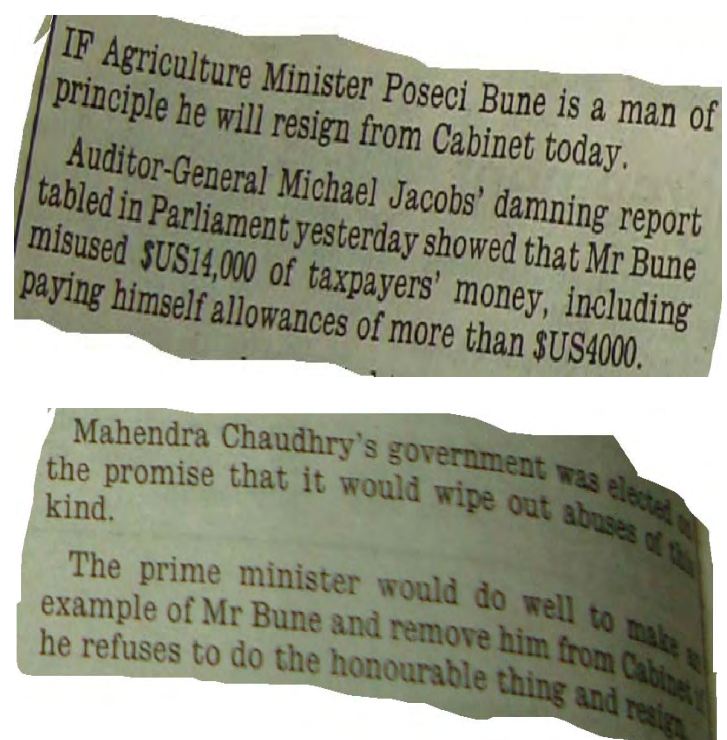


Figure 252 : When it is noble to quit, Editorial, (1999, October 6), p. 6. [422]

However in the case of Kaitani, when Qarase's Assistant Minister had admitted to committing a serious crime, FT not only remained silent, but also maintained this stance when a month after this incident, Kaitani was rewarded with a full Cabinet position as Minister of Information. Except for the two stories shown below (Figures 253 and 254), nothing at all appeared in the country's leading paper, the neutrality and balance of FT comes into question.

Kaitani in sedition probe

POLICE are considering what approach to take regarding alleged seditious comments by Assistant Minister for Information Simione Kaitani in a television programme.

On Fiji Television's Close Up programme, Mr Kaitani was shown footage of comments he made before the *taukei* march on May 19, 2000, declaring that indigenous Fijians should rule the country.

When asked by programme host Riaz Khaiyum whether the comments were seditious, Mr Kaitani said yes.

Figure 253 : Kaitani in sedition probe, (2003, February 11), p. 3. [1148] [NBL]



Figure 254 : Kaitani cries foul over TV debate, (2003, February 12), p. 5. [1149] [NBL]

In a paper on this issue (Singh, 2009) I concluded that had closer attention of the international and Fiji media provided greater scrutiny during those "democratic" days of Qarase's government, then Fiji may have been able to avoid the Bainimarama take-over in 2006. Fiji media's silence, especially FT which was very active during MPC rule meant it neglected to put Qarase's government accountable. If there are criticisms against media standards in Fiji, they are not without substance, as has been demonstrated by this event that failed to feature in any editorials, or be reported by another media organisation in Fiji.

The apparent partisan attitude of FT towards Qarase regime's erosion of good governance is evident from this media lethargy on a seditious Fijian Minister.

Chapter 28: Reflections on the Media Models

Four media theories in particular have been used as models in this research and analysis. Below is what had been observed.

28.1 Siebert's Four Theories of the Press

The Authoritarian and the Totalitarian (Soviet) theories were not in the contention, as they were beyond our era and political set-up in Fiji. The only two appropriate models under the Siebert framework have been the Libertarian (or Free Press) model and the Social Responsibility.

Libertarian: This model assumes that the press becomes the partner of mankind in a search for truth. As stated by Siebert et al. (1963), most democratic countries have adopted the principles of this model and embodied them in their constitutions or fundamental laws (p. 51). Fiji's 1997 Constitution also embodies freedom of speech and this has been deemed a fundamental right in Fiji. Under this principle, there should be no censorship, licensing or restriction of any type on the media to report freely and have professional autonomy (McQuail, 1987, p. 116).

In such a system, the press was given the responsibility of informing and helping discover truth through proper analysis. This also gave it the responsibility of being a check on the government to ensure it did not overstep its bounds.

The analysis did find that FT was allowed to operate freely within all the principles without any controls. This aspect saw the fit of FT within this framework. However it neglected to inform in some instances and often failed to provide analysis and seek unbiased truth. While it was seen to be seeking truth in showing the government in bad light such as in the tea lady affair, the housing for the Prime Minister and Dr Ganesh Chand and the appointment of Chaudhry's son, it failed to provide information on the land issues, especially the Land Use Commission (LUC), failed to provide any analysis on the protection of Fijian land under the 1997 Constitution, indicate how no Prime Minister could change constitutional safeguards on a whim and the difference between an Indian and an Indo-Fijian. FT was found wanting in some cases of failing to provide the truth and publish analytical articles to inform the public on the intricacies of issues it condemned the government for.

Social responsibility: While the fit of this model is desirable, especially in a developing country like Fiji, rocked by racial and inter and intra racial divisions and tensions, unfortunately this is hard to eventuate. This model goes a step further than the Libertarian model in requiring that apart from servicing the economic system, media should have an obligation to promote democratic systems, and enlighten the public with analytical stories. In this instance, the responsibility of media extends to society at large and is not confined to its shareholders and consumers. Under this model it does not only promote freedom, but supports and enhances it as well (Siebert et al., 1963, p. 95).

Unfortunately, the content analysis did not show any fit to this model. The emphasis of FT on racial and sensationally divisive issues, among others, rules this model out. Its support for the elite and the business community in opposing Chaudhry's socialist stance showed little responsibility towards the society at large, especially the large section of the poorer community.

28.2 Four World's News Values

Under this model postulated by Robie (2001) FT should fit into the Third World category, wherein the news should focus on positive achievements of the nation, pride within the country and integration and unity among the people. Strangely, what we found in the analysis was FT's tendency to dwell on negative issues. The overall summary shows almost two-thirds (62.8 per cent) of the stories were negative in nature, with seven of the 19 categories exceeding 70 per cent negative. Also the paper's emphasis on racial issues, especially on the new leadership, civil service appointments and the race associated with land issue meant it fell short of this model. This also calls for educating while it was noted that such informative stories were few and far in between. On the issue of integration and unity among people, FT obviously breached the code of conduct which restricted it from promoting racial issues that would cause discord in the communities. In the "racial agitation" and other chapters of this thesis quoted and illustrated numerous examples which showed that the media ethics and responsibility of FT as a Third World newspaper was highly questionable.

If anything, it was noted that FT in fact fitted into Robie's (2001) First World model where the paper is interested in scandals of prominent people and conflicts rather than the Third World approach associated with unity, conciliation and development news. This was evident with the tea lady scandal, Baba-Chaudhry tension and the reporting of the Zimbabwe land wars and the African conflict that had little relevance to Fiji. *In the*

final analysis FT acted as a First World paper in a Third World country. It appeared to have overlooked its responsibility to a developing nation and in fact fitted inversely with Robie's Third World press theory.

28.3 Development Journalism

The concept of DJ is more relevant to Third World countries, like Fiji where the sensitivity to cultural and political factors should be reflected in reporting. This concept calls for appreciation of cultural diversity, and for media to report on struggles of communities to improve their living conditions, social welfare and political participation (Loo, 1994, p. 2). Under this concept, a journalist is seen as an agent of social change, and reports with obligation towards the public, to report on issues with full knowledge, sensitivity, fairness and sense of purpose (Ibid, p. 3). This model may override promotion of multiracialism over freedom of expression, hence in order to promote peace and harmony in a multiracial environment, journalist would practise self-censorship. Unfortunately, there were hardly any examples where the journalist of FT reporting on racist and divisive provincial council meetings, Taukei movement meetings and other racially tainted meetings exercised such tendencies and traits required from development journalists. Pages and pages and headlines after headlines in our analysis revealed how such traits were overlooked to make the paper a racially sensational object that treated one section of its community with little respect. To make it worse, the racial composition of the reporters reporting such stories showed them to be heavily skewed in favour of one race which reported negatively on the other. In such an environment, some element of self-censorship and restraint in sub editing would have made FT a more responsible paper in a multiracial society.

DJ also needs to be associated with positive realities of living in a multicultural environment where journalists are to promote and enhance “a multicultural consciousness and develop attitudes to reinforce efforts at bringing about wider appreciation of cultural diversity leading up to next century” (Loo, 1994, pp. 8-9). *This trend was hardly visible.* While some editorial comments appeared to be supporting good governance and multiracialism, this was negated by multitudes of sensational stories that made the editorial messages and views appear hypocritical. While in one breath FT shouted “enough of racism” in the next breath it allowed too much leeway to its reporters to report verbatim on sensational, seditious and racially inciting news items hurtful to a large section of its population.

In this context, FT also failed in what Sharma (2007) called DJ as a mobilising agent for nation building or government partners in nation building (p. 35). *With its divisive news and overt opposition to everything the government did, FT failed to match this definition.* Sharma had cautioned the media not to become part of any agenda and neither should it become a vehicle for sending out any particular message. In doing this, media loses independence needed to report the news in an objective, accurate, fair and unbiased way (p. 54).

Analysis and narrations showed that FT did exactly that. *It became a mouthpiece of some nationalistic elements and the Fijian elites by sending the message that Fijians could not trust Indo-Fijians even in a democratically elected Parliament, hence they (Indo-Fijians) did not deserve equal rights in the Fijian style of democracy.*

28.4 The Propaganda Model

Of all the media models discussed in the literature review, it appears Herman and Chomsky (2008) were talking about FT when they proposed their Propaganda Model in their book, *Manufacturing Consent*. They argued that out of the maze of defenders of freedom and media autonomy concepts arises a truth that all facets of news are structured by the influence and consensus of the elite to ensure a systematic propaganda. Herman (1998) adds that media is not as free as it is assumed to be, it is dependent on the elite as well as uncritical of them, as they are the ones who pay the advertising dollars “and who want their ads to appear in a supportive selling environment”(p. 192). This model also speaks of media groups seeking comments from their own so-called experts to give opinion on certain issues (Herman and Chomsky, 2008, p. L). FT has a tendency to take comments from selected academics on issues relating to the government, and more often than not such comments were politically tainted because of the political leaning of such commentators. This has been reported in Chapter 8.

Murrell and Oakham (2008) said the people from whom the journalists obtained comments were either personally known to them or had recognised public positions. That perhaps was the tendency seen at FT where most comments were obtained by Fijian reporters either from little known chiefs, Fijian politicians with little following and leaders of makeshift organisations which were only propped up to oppose Chaudhry’s “Indian” government.

Two chapters and issues in the analysis, the one about Punja and companies (Chapter 22) and socialism and sharing wealth (Chapter 23) showed that FT failed to properly explain and allow greater debate on government's social justice policies. Its support for business interests was evident. It supported Hari Punja's Rice Company of Fiji when Chaudhry wanted to introduce rice licensing to support local farmers and called Chaudhry a "misguided Robin Hood" when he called for socialism, sharing wealth through taxation schemes and introduction of minimum wages. FT failed to present any analytical articles to either support government moves or any opposing analysis to show why MPC was wrong. Surprisingly, similar trend was also seen with the University of the South Pacific academics who should have spearheaded more debates on this contentious issue.

Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model, which says that the media supports the elite and well-connected, such as the business community, the advertising business concerns, the chiefs and the landowners was seen to apply well to the editorial conduct and practices of The Fiji Times.

Chapter 29: Conclusion

The literature review chapters (Chapters 1 to 4) highlighted numerous cases where *The Fiji Times* came under scrutiny for its approach and stance on various issues. From the Mooloolaba Papers (Robie, 2000a, 2000b & 2004) to Chaudhry (2000); Devi (1992); Devi & Chand (2008); Duncan (2002); Field, Baba & Nabobo-Baba (2005); [Padmini] Gaunder (2006); Gillion (1977); [Christine] Gounder (2006); Kiran (2005); Obini (2000); Robertson and Sutherland (2001) and Robie (2002a, 2001b & 2000c), we have seen cases where FT was subjected to either academic research or general scrutiny by academics, researchers and commentators and in almost all cases it was seen that the media stance or the approach of the paper were questionable. The trend in this content analysis has been similar as well.

The analysis and interpretations presented in Chapters 7 to 28 inclusive amassed into some interesting findings. Some of the notable concluding observations from the content analysis are:

a) There was a clear discord between what FT said and advocated in its editorials and what appeared in the papers and its news selection and writing in the newsrooms. In fact Obini (2000) summed up this stance of FT that may be comparable to Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde approach, where the same individual tends to show two completely different and diametrically opposed opinions and attitudes:

There are two ways to describe *The Fiji Times* editorials about ALTA and other issues affecting Fiji. First, it can be likened to someone trying to make peace between two persons fighting, while furtively winking at one of them to keep on fighting. The other is the proverbial rat in some African tradition, which bites, and at the same time blows to soothe the pain of its biting. (p. 24)

This description aptly fitted FT on occasions where it appeared to have one view of the editorial writer while an opposite stance was seen in the stories appearing in the news pages. This reflected a disagreement between the editorial opinion and the newsroom where what was preached was not seen to be practised. The newspaper did not walk its talk on the good advice it gave on good governance and multiracial unity.

b) The lack of coordination between the newspaper management and the newspaper operations (mentioned in (a) above) was clear. The “management” comprised of

expatriate policy and editorial formulators, notably the expatriate publisher and the editor in chief, Alan Robinson and Russell Hunter (for part of the time) respectively. The “operations” or the Fijian “gatekeepers” comprised the editor Samisoni Kakaivalu, his deputy Netani Rika and the senior Fijian newsroom team including Margaret Wise. Lack of coordination appears to have stemmed from unbridled newsroom control on the local staff who produced slanted headlines that have been illustrated in the analysis and the choice and “manufacture” of stories, as had been cited, for example, by Robie (2001, p. 6) where a journalist at FT admitted that the article she wrote about a Minister had been “totally twisted” and the headline was given by a member of the senior staff. The “management” expatriate executives ought to be accountable for what was found as an environment which gave unbridled “gate keeping” duties to unqualified, insensitive and partisan newsroom staff.

c) New groups of militant and nationalist organisations sprang up quickly to oppose government’s initiatives. Their little known leaders with suspect following were given undeserved exposure by FT under the guise of media freedom despite such utterances bordering on sedition and hate-speech and in clear breach of Media Code of Conduct.

d) FT provided ample opportunity for opponents to attack the highest office of the country - the President and the Prime Minister. A responsible media, especially in a developing country divided on racial lines, would be expected to exercise caution and ethics and not permit a display of such disrespect to the leaders of a the nation under the guise of media freedom.

e) The number of important issues where government had to resort to letters to editor columns to tell its side of the story was evident that there was something seriously amiss in media balance and adherence to the Code of Conduct that called for equal opportunity for response. In the analysis, instances were quoted where the government as well as the members of the general public wrote in to clarify and inform on issues which was seen as the media’s role. It appears either FT failed to grasp and inform on issues or neglected its duty of keeping Fiji well informed to safeguard democracy, and not sufficiently balancing their stories with all sides of views.

f) In Fiji, equitable distribution of civil service positions at all levels to reflect the country’s demographic makeup is a Constitutional requirement and directive. It seems this escaped the knowledge of FT. That is why it allowed misinformed viewpoints

without trying to point out the anomaly. It not only ignored the lopsided racial mix in the civil service, but it itself did not abide by the general principle that the newsroom should be the mirror of the country. There was marked favour of Fijians , not only at all levels of its news team, but also in news reporting where some 95 per cent of the stories with bylines were from Fijian reporters in a racially divided nation with Indo-Fijians comprising some 40 per cent of the population at that time (Chapter 26).

g) There appeared to be a double standard of scrutiny and criticism of different governments by FT. Its zeal and so called investigative prowess in unearthing scandals and indulging in muckraking were seen to be inversely comparable when reporting on Chaudhry's "Indian" government and Qarase's "Fijian" government respectively. While the objective of this thesis was not to determine this question, the difference was so marked that at least three cases showed FT's favourable stance to a "Fijian" government. These included appointments of a disbarred lawyer, Qoriniasi Bale as Fiji's Attorney General, non renewal of work permit of Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, Peter Ridgway and paying little media scrutiny to Simione Kaitani's admission of the criminal offence of sedition on the national TV programme *Close Up* (Chapter 27). These examples bring into question FT's media ethics and its claims of being an independent, neutral and free media.

h) The question of ethics arises from the role played by star FT reporter Margaret Wise whose romance and affair with a prime minister and a child out of wedlock was common knowledge. The person who placed very sharp scrutiny on others, especially Chaudhry and his government, was spared by her employers, who allowed and apparently encouraged undeserving and hostile attacks on the government in general and Indo-Fijians in particular where she penned many racially divisive stories (Chapter 20).

(i) In terms of the relevant media theories applicable to FT, it would appear that the newspaper sympathised and perhaps collaborated with the business community to protect the elite interests, be they the business or influential chiefs who had lost out to Chaudhry. Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model came into play when Chaudhry imposed licence on rice imports restricting import quota to Hari Punja's company, and in his social justice speech, announcing new policies on minimum wages, corporate tax and redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. FT's defence of the business community and its failure to properly explain and debate the issue about social

democracy showed its leaning and favour towards its advertisers and the business community. This provides ample reason why the well connected people wished to see the end of Chaudhry's People's Coalition government. Chaudhry government's new "socialist" policies would have meant a big dent in the profits of the big businesses which were called to share wealth with the poorer section of the community (Chapters 22, 23 and 28).

(j) Some remaining concluding remarks and observations that bring into question the media standards of *The Fiji Times*:

- FT's stance of dwelling on negative news and overlooking the positive achievements of the new government (Chapter 7).
- Prioritising and sensationalising of what may be regarded as issues of little news value such as the tinting of the PM's car worth \$385 (front page story), Rajendra Chaudhry's leave overpayment through a procedural oversight worth \$194 (page 3 story in bold with a photo and an accompanying editorial), carpeting and renovation of ministerial offices and internal staffing issues (Chapter 8).
- Issues raised by Chaudhry during the launch of the Media Code of Conduct, claims of code not practised by FT and questions about the newspaper's sense of media responsibility (Chapter 8).
- "Manufacturing news" regarding Rabuka's "Race bomb" speech when such sensational terms were not used and an opinionated news item on "Minister blowing trumpet" referring to Dr Ganesh Chand's media conference (Chapter 8).
- Sensational headlines (Chapters 9, 10 & 25), seditious, racially divisive and even treasonable headlines and stories (discussing coup and overthrow of government, Chapter 9) and lack of haste in correcting errors, ("Chief warns of war," Fig 89, Chapter 9)
- Land tension highlighted, issues not properly explained, Maika Qarikau's personal animosity with MPC and his conflict of public officer and politicising role not queried or questioned by FT (Chapter 10).
- Favourable exposure and access to nationalists and anti-government elements such as Apisai Tora, Sakiasi Butadroka, Taniela Tabu and Simione Kaitani when

the same exposure and opportunities were not granted to government ministers (Chapters 9, 19 & 24).

- Undue exposure of racial tensions of Zimbabwe, accompanied by provocative headlines and pictures of violence when Fiji was trying to come to terms with similar issues (Chapter 25).

29.1 The final word

The analysis showed that FT projected Chaudhry as an “Indian” government which could not be trusted to safeguard the interests of the Fijians. It failed to inform the common people about the safeguards enshrined in the 1997 Constitution which stipulates that no Prime Minister, at his own whim, could implement any changes affecting native land and laws protecting the rights of the indigenous people. FT also allowed a free access and voice to those opposing the government and did not edit treasonable, seditious and hate-speech that were seen as derogatory to others in any civilised democracy or civilised media. The newspaper’s clear partisan bias saw it giving pronouncement to any and sundry items that presented and depicted the government in an unfavourable picture.

With the newspaper’s stance and it appears, newsroom policy of highlighting the negatives and subduing the positives, and its lack of impartial and neutral reporting, *The Fiji Times* presented Chaudhry government in a bad light, and effectively painted it as dishonest, untrustworthy, corrupt and undeserving as a government led by a “non-believer” and womaniser. That appears to be the reason why there were no mass protests or uprising at the assault on democracy when Speight took over the Parliament.

While MPC himself was also responsible for democracy’s downfall, FT hastened and helped the process. What happened in Fiji cannot be fully attributed to the actions of George Speight, his renegade soldier and the ethno-nationalist elements. While FT helped create such an atmosphere that was ripe for the removal of the government from means other than democratic, contributory factors from Chaudhry’s style of leadership hastened the process and discouraged any uprising in support of democracy. Had Chaudhry been able to build bridges, especially with the Fijian community and its institutions, such huge support for Speight and the ethno-nationalist elements may not have materialised. If anything, Fijians themselves may have caused an uprising to support democracy. However nothing like that happened because of MPC’s apparent

insensitive and abrasive style of doing things that were not conducive to the Fijian way and ethos of getting things done. Unpopular decisions taken on the strength of democracy in a young nation where democracy to the Fijian culture had been fairly recent, the rapid action based on such mandate was a foolhardy action which MPC took despite ample warning from various sources, including then President, (now deceased) Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. Tinkering with the Constitution (Chapter 15), fiddling with land (Chapter 10), appointment of his son (Chapter 11) inability to maintain accord within his coalition partners (Chapter 13), inexpedient dealings in the tea lady affair (Chapter 12), animosity with the media (Clark – Hunter work permits and *Fiji's Daily Post* and Radio Fiji controversies (Chapters 14 and 21 respectively) and inability to build bridges with political foes, chiefs and people crucial to the success of the government policies led to the early demise of the Chaudhry People's Coalition Government which failed to attract any significant popular uprising to support him, his government or the fall of democracy.

This fall of democracy under Chaudhry and his inability to savour the fruits of the 1999 election victory is explained succinctly by Lal (2010) through citation of the Roman historian, Livy:

Chaudhry was not content only to be the leader of the Fiji Labour Party. He was determined to become the undisputed leader of the Indo-Fijian community as well. He was committed to NFP's destruction, using whatever means he had at his disposal....It took Chaudhry a full decade to realise his goal of toppling Reddy and assuming the mantle of Indo-Fijian leadership, but his great tragedy was that he was not fated to enjoy his spot in the sun for too long. Livy's words are apt: 'You know how to conquer Hannibal, but you know not how to utilise victory.' (p. 489

There is little doubt that the analysis carried out in this research shows that FT did not operate like a responsible and more cautious media in a developing nation where the concept of democracy was still evolving and adjusting to a post-colonial phase and FT's obsession with racial overtones in its stories divided the nation. All the good things about media being a uniting force were rarely seen in FT. If anything, FT lived to its colonial reputation of being anti-Indian since it was established in 1869. It also displayed traits characteristic of the Propaganda Model where FT was seen to be protecting the interest of the Fijian political elite and the business community. While no proof has come to light to substantiate allegations that some sections of the business

community contributed to the fall of the People's Coalition Government, this research indicates enough motives for that to be so and why the business community wished to see Chaudhry go.

As concluded in Chapter 4, the earlier studies on FT have indicated that despite the passage of time, the partisan approach of the newspaper in favour of the elite class has not changed. Times have changed; from Gaunder's (2006) and Gillion's (1977) reporting of the 1860s to Gounder's (2006), Kiran's (2005), and Obini's (2000) and studies in the new millennium. Even the elites have changed; from the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), the British government and the colonial Europeans to the indigenous Eastern Fijian chiefs, the Fijian elites running the government and the predominantly Indian business community. What has not changed is the credibility of the Propaganda Model which remained steadfast in giving credence to Herman and Chomsky's (2008) theory on how the media becomes, and in case of FT, continues to be a sympathiser and mouthpiece of the elites, at the cost of its watchdog role.

29.2 Future research

This research has gone through substantial literature and reference to allow for the continuum of research in this field. While there has been much criticism of FT behaving like a First World media in a Third World country, it is interesting to see how media was forced to change its stance since Bainimarama's coup in December 2006 and how the Fiji Media Industry Development Decree 2010 nudged Fiji media into a seemingly "development journalism" mode and how this transition has seen the paradigm shift in media focus from racial conflicts, divisive politics and division in the community to development, cross-cultural sensitivities and unity.

The other interesting feature has been the departure of News Limited from Fiji and FT's purchase by the Motibhai Group. What is interesting here is the media ownership which now largely rests in the hands of those people who were accused and suspected of supporting the divisive elements and the ethno-nationalists in the removal of the People's Coalition Government which was shifting towards a socialistic trend.

Fiji's business Indian community, the Gujarati community now controls almost 90 per cent of Fiji's print media. C.J. Patel (who featured in this analysis), with Vinod Patel, owns *Fiji Sun*, while, the Motibhai Group now owns FT. Hari Punja, who also featured in the analysis, has shares in the radio broadcasting group, Communications Fiji

Limited. With some of the elites now in control of Fiji media which FT was seen to be protecting, have ended up controlling the Fiji media. This new balance in ownership, coupled with the new media decree would provide rich fodder for an ongoing research to gauge the transition of Fiji media into a “real” Third World media: A Third World media for a Third World nation. There appears to be an opportunity to see a genesis and perhaps metamorphosis of a unique Fiji and the Pacific model of media, which is grounded in local sensitivities and environment while taking cognisance of and adapting international media principles of freedom, fairness, neutrality and balance.

This author harbours a wish to carry this research forward with a doctoral thesis in this subject area, given appropriate opportunities and resources.

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