

BRIEF HISTORY
OF
THE FIJI TIMES

By L. G. USHER.



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on October 15, 1962.

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This paper should, I am afraid, be called — "An Introduction to the History of the Fiji Times" or an outline, or a skeleton, or a sample, because it does not pretend to be in any way complete. What I have done is to apply the sampling technique. This means that I have not made even the sketchiest attempt to read through the files, covering very nearly a century, but have taken from the shelves the bound volumes for significant years in the history of the newspaper, and have extracted items which help to illumine that history. A wealth of material still remains.

The files of the Fiji Times are in two places. The Barker Library, in the care of the Central Archives, has the volumes from 1869 to 1919. There is a complete file from 1920 to the present day at the Fiji Times office. The Archives has the Registrar General's file for most of the life of the newspaper, but for many of the years the file is incomplete.

THE BEGINNINGS

The first issue of the Fiji Times appeared at Levuka on September 4 1869. The office was at Albion Passage, Beach Street — not far from where the Methodist Church stands, at the foot of Mission Hill. The founder was George Littleton Griffiths, a remarkable man by any standards, and a pioneer of the type that helps to mould sturdy nations. Thirty six years later, the compilers of the Cyclopaedia of Fiji interviewed Mr. Griffiths and he told them that since his arrival in Fiji he had been "daily busily engaged in journalistic work, recording the social, political and commercial affairs of the land of his adoption."

"The tomes of the Fiji Times," he said, "contain a history of the country, and the thirty-six volumes are a cyclopaedia of all its affairs for more than a third of a century." He recalled that all the material for the production of the Fiji Times — especially in the early years — had to be imported in small and irregular sailing craft from England or New South Wales. Added to this had been "the many periods of political unrest and climatic disturbances in the shape of hurricanes."

The Cyclopaedia continued, "In 1869, when Mr. Griffiths landed in Levuka, there was no form of Government whatever . . . considering the freedom from restraint which the settlers enjoyed, every man doing as he thought right in his own eyes, the community was an exceedingly orderly one, and comparatively few disturbances occurred. For the first two years . . . the press played an important part in the preservation of order." Reading the files of those early years leaves no doubt that this was the case.

Elsewhere, the Cyclopaedia of Fiji talks of the lawless irresponsibles which Levuka attracted in those days and says, concerning them:

"Club law was, in short, the only law by which any redress or satisfaction could be obtained. Among the quieter section of the community, an aggrieved person, as a rule, contented himself by calling a public meeting and making known his tale of wrong. His opponent did exactly the same, perhaps at the same time, in another part of the town. Then, each man having given further ventilation to his grievances through the medium of the Fiji Times, the matter generally ended. Although a good deal of hard language may have been exchanged, the peace of the community had not been disturbed."

In the matter of letters, the editor of the Fiji Times of those days was a tolerant man. In the issue of August 5, 1871 there is a letter to the editor from Dr. J. R. Ryley, a political figure of the time. The letter is six and a half columns long.

On the other hand, the editor was a man capable of a few "hard words" of his own. Among the non-existent laws was the one covering libel and newspapers were somewhat less fettered than they are today.

I have chosen one editorial, first to show the vigour of political comment in those days, and second to indicate the editorial style of the Fiji Times in its early years. On October 8, 1870, the newspaper had a few words to say on the subject of the British consul, a Mr. March.

It began:

"Eastern monarchs had a way of ruining their influential followers by presenting them with a "white elephant," a royal animal which it was death to correct; an animal that had to be fed on the choicest the land could produce and was allowed to trample down crops and make a nuisance of himself as he pleased, without remonstrance or hindrance. So the British Government in sending Mr. March as their representative have saddled their subjects in Fiji with a "white elephant."

Then the newspaper makes its position clear:

"We are quite aware that in again making Mr. March a subject of an article, we are liable to be accused of alliteration, and would prefer leaving him alone in his glory, with his cloak of supercilious reserve around him, but it is impossible. Of all the people in Fiji we are the greatest sufferers by our Consul's ungracious and overbearing austerity. Our office is close to the castle of this consular ogre, and men visit us daily in a high state of excitement, goaded to madness by some acrimonious brusquerie, and declaim withering invective against constituted authority in general and the British Consulate in particular, till our very devils leave the press in affright. We are inundated with letters on the same subject so full of vituperation and ornamental exasperation as to be unintelligible".

There is a momentary letting up :—

"We have no personal illfeeling against Mr. March."

The attack is resumed:

"It is doubtless his nature to be ungracious and taciturn, but his presence here as Consul is a mistake; he is a square plug in a round hole. Our principal object in again noticing Mr. March is to warn people not to waste time and stationery in complaining to us of his conduct; we are powerless. All we can do or say in the matter will not shift him one inch on his self-erected pedestal of superiority and arrogance. He is our white elephant and may trample down our crop of independent feeling, and consume our choicest morsels of self-respect with impunity. Whether things can remain as they are much

longer, is to be seen; kings have been dethroned ere now, and it is no treason to say that the greatest blessing England could give us would be to remove Mr. March from his office as British Consul in Fiji."

Consuls were a particular bugbear to Mr. Griffiths — as we will see later when I come to talk of the newspaper's intervention in the mail situation but the editorials of the Fiji Times were far more often constructive and conciliatory than denunciatory. The first editorial said, "The only promise that we can make is that we shall watch the times and try to make our paper a public good; a practical, useful and honest medium for the support of honour, truth and right." The second issue said, "We call the attention of the residents of Levuka to the necessity of immediate action in finding some bond of union among us for the purpose of securing peace and order in our midst."

Mr. Griffiths was a practical as well as a progressive man, and on November 13, 1869 we find the Fiji Times calling for "an asylum for the sick and a burial place for the dead" at Levuka. In successive issues in 1871 the Fiji Times called for the formation of a Volunteer Corps, stated the need for a bank in Fiji and suggested that there should be lights to guide the way in and out of the Levuka harbour. "A good staff on each side of the passage, with a light on, would do until we can afford a more permanent light-house," the paper said. A few issues later, there was an editorial appeal for better sanitary arrangements in the town and from the graphic description of existing conditions there is little doubt that the plea was justified.

FIJI TIMES STAMPS

In its early issues, the paper kept up a steady demand for better mail services, and it was not very long before Griffiths, characteristically, did something practical about the situation, one of his objects being, of course, to help in the distribution of the Fiji Times. He set up his own post office at Levuka and printed his own stamps at the Fiji Times office — simple affairs, on plain white paper of a type then known as quad-rille, and made up with ordinary type enclosed in rectangles formed with printer's "rules."

The issue of September 24, 1870 announced the new service.

"To ensure the speedy delivery of all letters and parcels, a boat will be always in readiness to board incoming vessels on anchoring in Levuka, and take mails on board any boat, however small, proceeding to the Fijis or any part of the Colonies. Our agents in London, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, New Zealand, and San Francisco will execute any commission however small. We hope to induce captains of vessels trading in Fiji to make their first and last call at the 'Express Office,' and in return will act gratuitously as Booking Agents for Passengers, and advertise their departure Without Charge. Settlers in out districts requiring any small commission, the supply of which is not in the province of the local storekeeper, will receive prompt attention by addressing a letter to the Manager of the Fiji Times Express."

The service came into being on November 1, 1870, and a Fiji Times editorial said:

"Letters need no longer remain in the consulate till they are yellow with age or devoured by rats. The Fiji Times Express will secure many of the advantages and comforts of the old country and

the Colonies, where the prompt delivery of letters and papers brings near the distant and keeps people in communication with other parts of the world. We shall no longer be put outside the walls of Creation, but in regular and frequent communication with the great centres of civilization; we shall feel ourselves to be one with the great human family, no longer cut off and isolated, but with the Fiji Times Express we can keep up rapid and constant communication with the most distant members of the great family."

The Fiji Times stamps were in denominations of 1d, 3d, 6d and 1/-, and in Fiji there were agents of the Fiji Times Express at Rewa, Suva, Nadroga, Nadi, Kadavu, Vuna, Wairiki, Savusavu, Lomaloma, Bua, Dreketi, the Ra Coast and Ba River. The service lasted until May, 1872, when the Cakobau Government, having started its own postal service, stepped in and stopped this private intervention in what is, properly, a government responsibility. But the Fiji Times Express had served its purpose, and Derrick's History of Fiji sums up the results:

"Not only was the service appreciated by the planters, but it also provided a means of distributing the newspaper to the men in the outlying islands; thus the Fiji Times was able to reflect and shape public opinion in all parts of the group, and it played an important part in the political turmoil of the following four years."

The stamps were reprinted later, to meet a demand from collectors, but this issue was on a different paper, and the stamps were not used for actual postal purposes.

THE GRIFFITHS PERIOD

A great deal more could be said about the Griffiths period, and particularly about his opposition to the unrepresentative government that preceded Cession and to the Fijian affairs policies of Sir Arthur Gordon, but that is perhaps the subject for another paper later.

Some brief facts about the man himself may be of interest. He was the son of Arthur Griffiths, an architect and an artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy. His brother was a Glasgow paper merchant when this brother — also Arthur — died, G. L. Griffiths immediately sent for the two girls who had been orphaned. At Levuka they joined Griffiths's own 10 children, and five more he had adopted out of natural kindness of heart. One of the nieces, Matty, later married Mr. Ernest Baker, for many years a District Commissioner in Fiji. The other, Ella, married Mr. J. B. Stinson, who had come from Canada to join the Rev. William Floyd at Levuka. Their son Charles is the present mayor of Suva.

Griffiths was himself twice mayor of Suva, and he served for many years as a councillor at both Levuka and Suva.

His move to Suva came after the capital had been transferred. The Fiji Times, at Levuka, protested most vigorously about the proposed change of capital, but later became reconciled and on October 20, 1881 Griffiths started a separate newspaper, The Suva Times, in the new capital.

I detect a somewhat defensive note in the editorial of the first issue:

"It must be accepted that we are prepared to defend the position of Suva as the legitimate one for the capital. Doubtless we shall have many occasions to explain away the twists and sneers of our Levuka friends. We use these words with consideration, for we have no enmity with Levuka. We wish her citizens every prosperity,

and we look forward to many pleasant visits there. But we care not to answer scorn for scorn. If it is to be a subject of joke they may have their fun out of the soap-stone, the want of water and other apparent deficiencies. We shall abide our time. If they will listen to serious reasoning, to the precedent of other countries, we will gladly meet them in quiet, calm argument. Knowing Levuka well, and appreciating its central position, we cannot help seeing the insecurity of its "protected roadstead," the inadaptability of its physical features for the site of a moderately large town, and its utter want of any back country."

Griffiths's civic zeal soon showed itself, and in its second issue the Suva Times spoke about the town's main thoroughfare :

"Victoria Parade" has been made, made in such a way that one week's experience of horse traffic with the lightest of vehicles would render it utterly useless for foot passengers. As a proof of this we need only to ask attention to that portion between the bank site and the corner of Gordon Street where the wheelbarrows, in conveying the debris from the excavation to fill up the swampy land below the road, have made as much havoc in a few days with our fine causeway as the heaviest of waggon traffic might have made in twelve months with a "human made" road. It is true the centre of the road is untouched, for there the metal wears off the feet of the workmen. Again the culverts have been left veritable traps for the unwary, a narrow bridge of sleepers in the middle, scarce wide enough for a hand-cart, being the only means of crossing. No provision whatever is made for foot passengers apart from any business traffic that may ensue."

At the end of 1886, Griffiths bowed finally to the inevitable, and on January 1, 1887 the Fiji Times was published at Suva, and the Suva Times ceased existence.

The Fiji Times office faced Renwick Road, at the Triangle corner, where Michelmores's building, or part of it, now stands. Later, the office was moved further along Renwick Road, and to the other side, and was upstairs above the present Narsey's electrical shop. To this day, the Narsey family occasionally refer to the building as the Fiji Times block.

Somewhere about the time of World War I G.-L. Griffiths died, and the newspaper and job-printing business passed to his eldest son — another Arthur — who carried on for a time and then sold out to a limited liability company.

THE BARKER PERIOD

Suva at that time had two newspapers. The opposition to the Fiji Times came from the Western Pacific Herald, which had been started by Mr. Alport Barker on April 13, 1901, in Gordon Street premises on a site now forming part of the Sabrina Building.

The building which now houses the Fiji Times was built by Mr. Barker in about 1932. It was designed by Mr. R. A. Derrick and at first housed only the printing works and paper store. The building was remodelled in the 1950's to include the editorial and business offices, which had previously been further down Gordon Street, on the Sabrina Building site, near the Victoria Parade corner. The Western Pacific Herald was first published twice a week, then three times and finally daily.

With Griffiths's guiding hand removed the Fiji Times met with increasing difficulty in recruiting responsible staff, and opposition from the

Western Pacific Herald became more formidable. In 1918, Mr. Barker bought out the Fiji Times, and on May 20, 1918, the words "Fiji Times" were added at the top of Page 1 of the "Western Pacific Herald". A generously worded editorial explained why :

"Circumstances have combined to make it unprofitable, and something more than that, for two daily papers to exist and, while we are only glad that we are still here, we trust we will not be charged with being hypocritical when we state that we, in common with others, feel a tinge of regret that a paper so long associated with the history of these islands should, in a sense, cease publication. It is partly because of this feeling, purely one of sentiment, that from today, this journal will be known as the "Fiji Times and Western Pacific Herald" as we believe that this course will be approved by the public who, for so many years have associated the "Fiji Times" with these islands."

The name of the newspaper was later shortened to "The Fiji Times and Herald," and the masthead recorded that it incorporated The Fiji Times, The Suva Times and The Western Pacific Herald.

Mr. Griffiths had been associated with the Fiji Times for more than forty eventful years. Mr. Barker owned and directed the affairs of his newspapers for more than fifty years. He, too, was Mayor of Suva, and for many years he was an elected member of the Legislative Council. It was fitting that, in 1951, 50 years after the foundation of the Western Pacific Herald, he should have been honoured with a knighthood. He fought hard for greater representation of the people of Fiji in the Legislative Council and in municipal bodies, and the voice of the Fiji Times was heard unceasingly in this cause.

THE ROBSON PERIOD

In the early 1950's, Sir Alport formed his newspaper and printing business into a company, the Fiji Times and Herald Ltd., and in February 1956, the whole of the shares in this company were bought by Mr. R. W. Robson, on behalf of a Sydney company, Pacific Publications Pty Ltd., which he had built up over a period of nearly 30 years to produce the Pacific Islands Monthly, and the reference "bible" of the Pacific Islands, the Pacific Islands Year Book, both of which he had founded and edited.

With a life-time of experience behind him, Mr. Robson studied the newspaper needs of present-day Fiji and he came to three major decisions.

One was that if the Fiji Times was to grow with the Colony, modern plant would have to be installed to produce it. The second was that to increase the news coverage to that required of a national newspaper, the editorial and reporting staff must be increased. The third was that to get same-day distribution of the newspaper throughout the scattered islands and towns of Fiji, it must be published in the early morning, and full use must be made of the Colony's growing air services. So in April 30, 1956, morning publication began, and Mr. Robson decided at the same time to go back to the original name of The Fiji Times.

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS

A brief word about newspapers associated with the Fiji Times.

Until the 1930's a weekly edition, called the South Seas Weekly, was published, mainly for country circulation, because poor communications made the circulation of a daily paper difficult. In 1935, Mr. Barker started a weekly in Hindustani, called Shanti Dut. He recruited a young man,

Gurudayal Sharma, who had been trained as a Hindi compositor with earlier Indian language newspapers, and today, 27 years later, Mr. Sharma is still editor of the newspaper he helped to found. In March 1962, the third side of the triangle was added, and a Fijian language newspaper, *Nai Lalakai*, with Luke Vuidreketi as editor, came into being.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications are always important in any newspaper enterprise. The *Fiji Times* this year printed a United States news item which had been flashed to England via the satellite Telstar, and then had come from London to Melbourne by cable, and from Melbourne to Suva by radio. That is the modern way of doing things. The *Fiji Times* in its pioneering days had to depend for overseas news on the arrival of ships, and the "latest intelligence" was usually several weeks old by the time it found its way into print.

There was an unusually frank note in the issue of September 26, 1874. Cession was then at hand, and the news columns reflected the momentous decisions that were being made at Levuka and at the council of chiefs, then meeting at Nasova to decide whether or not Fiji should be handed over to the British Crown. H.M.S. *Pearl*, with Sir Hercules Robinson aboard as emissary of the British Government, had arrived three days before, and was at anchor off Nasova. So perhaps it is not surprising that with all this going on the *Fiji Times* should print, "Want of space prevents us from publishing the European telegrams received per *Pearl*. They are, however, altogether unimportant, and our readers will not lose anything by our holding them over until next issue."

Overseas news continued to arrive by ship-borne mail until 1902, when the Pacific Cable Board established a cable station at Suva. The ship *Anglia* laid the trans-pacific cable into Suva harbour, and Mr. Alport Barker was among those who helped to drag the end ashore at the Cable Board's headquarters, now those of its successor, Cable and Wireless Ltd. From then on, overseas news came promptly, if somewhat briefly, by cable, through Reuters service. The *Fiji Times* compensated for the brevity of the individual messages by large headlines. I have taken some examples from the 1919 files. On January 4th, this was a cable item:

THE BOLSHEVIST DANGER ONE REPORT ACTIVITY REDUCED

Melbourne, Thursday.

The Bolshevist danger has been somewhat reduced.

Another on January 9:

THE HOHENZOLLERNS IN BETTER HEALTH THE EX-KAISER AND HIS WIFE

Melbourne, this day.

The ex-Kaiser and the ex-Kaiserina have recovered their health.

But for really ingenious use of space, I like one later in the year. The principal cables were summarised at the top of the page, and there, in large type across two columns, was:

ROOSEVELT DEAD GREAT AMERICAN STATESMAN

Then, lower down the page, came the cable news, under three single column headlines :

ROOSEVELT DEAD
DEATH ANNOUNCED
OCCURRED LAST NIGHT
(Reuters Agency)

Melbourne, this day.

Mr. Theodore Roosevelt died last night.

Not all the cables were as brief as that, and the service was obviously a useful one, keeping the people of Fiji in general touch with world events. In 1918, the cable service was supplemented by a radio link through Honolulu. The Fiji Times of Monday, June 30, 1919, contained a proud paragraph :

"Our cablegram announcing the signing of the Peace Treaty by Germany was received by us from Paris, via Vancouver, at 3.45 o'clock yesterday morning. The actual signing, according to the official cablegram to his Excellency the Governor, was at 4 p.m. on Saturday, and, allowing for the difference in time between Paris and Suva, the cable conveying the news reached us within half an hour of the actual occurrence in France. At a few minutes after six o'clock yesterday, as soon as it was daylight, we issued an "extra" notifying the event, which was distributed in town, whilst the outlying subscribers were notified by telephone. The official confirmation of the news, to his Excellency the Governor, arrived about midday several hours after our rush message."

The Reuter cable service was expanded as the years went on, and the number of words received each day increased, and the individual items became longer. Before World War II, long messages, labelled British Official Press, were received and distributed by the Government. During the war, the Information Office set up as part of the Colony's wartime administration, provided a daily summary of news gleaned by the staff from assiduous radio listening from, as I well remember, as one of those responsible, 6 o'clock or earlier each morning.

In the post-war years, teleprinter networks connecting newspaper offices throughout the country were set up in Australia and New Zealand, and in 1957 A A P-Reuter and the Fiji Times came to an arrangement, in co-operation with the Australian Overseas Telecommunications Commission at the Australian end, and Cable & Wireless Ltd. at the Fiji end, for a daily teleprinter service from Sydney to Suva. For an hour every day, a teleprinter in the Fiji Times office chatters busily away, typing, at the rate of a word a second, a special bulletin compiled by the A A P-Reuter staff from news received from all over the world, through the major news-gathering agencies of the English-speaking nations. The 2,000 mile link is, I believe, one of the longest in the world operated for an individual newspaper.

Local newsgathering in the early days of the Fiji Times depended, as now, on staff reporters and part-time correspondents. From outside Levuka, news arrived by ship, either by letter or in the personal reports of passengers or the ship's company. When the capital moved to Suva, the need for speedy communication with the new port, and with Government headquarters, arose, and a pigeon service was established. It was an effi-

cient service, too, with 22 minutes a normal time for a message to get from Suva to Levuka. I'm not sure that the Post Office even today couldn't, with advantage, look into the possibility of taking a few pigeons on the strength.

The shipping news in *The Fiji Times* in the latter days of Levuka publication carried the sub-heading "By Pigeon Post from Suva." For the *Fiji Times* "pigeongram" service, lofts were fitted to the roofs of the Suva and Levuka offices. Mr. C. W. Caldwell, assistant manager for James McEwan & Co., was a pigeon fancier, and in the latter years of the 19th century he regularly flew his birds from his Des Voeux Road home at Suva to Levuka and elsewhere in the group with press and other messages.

As telephone and telegram services developed, they helped in the gathering of news from the scattered islands of the Colony. In 1961, the *Fiji Times* established a branch office at Lautoka, and in June, 1962, the Suva and Lautoka offices were linked by teleprinter — the necessary lines and equipment being hired from the Posts & Telegraphs Department. Messages, news items, advertisements, printing orders, accounting details — anything than can be written — are typed in one office and appear immediately in the other. Unlike the Melbourne news arrangement, this teleprinter service is two-way.

ILLUSTRATIONS

In its earlier years, the *Fiji Times* contained no illustrations. In the 1920's photographs printed from blocks made overseas began to appear, and as Government Information Services in Britain and the United States blossomed during World War II and afterwards, the number of illustrations from plastic blocks grew.

When Mr Robson bought the *Fiji Times*, his company was operating a Klischograph electronic engraving machine at Sydney. Problems arose because of trade union restrictions, and arrangements were made for the purchase of the Klischograph by the Suva photographic firm of Stinsons Ltd., with promise that the *Fiji Times* would be a steady customer. Since then, photographs of Fiji events and personalities have been a daily feature of the *Fiji Times* and associated newspapers, and a member of the reporting staff, Mr. Stan Whippy, has gradually developed into a Press Photographer, supplementing his reporting activities.

STAFF TRAINING

A notable contribution to Fiji by the *Fiji Times* has been the training of men of the Colony in the many skills involved in the printing trade. When the Oceania Printery opened a new factory last month, the proprietor, Mr. G. N. Dean, acknowledged with some pride that his first printing training had been with the *Fiji Times*, and men in printing establishments throughout Fiji are able to say the same thing. The process continues, and a programme of training young men in printing and in the other aspects of newspaper production, sale and distribution is going on continuously. Of the 80 or so people employed by the *Fiji Times* and *Herald Ltd.*, more than 90 per cent were born in Fiji or in neighbouring Pacific island territories. Fijians, Indians, part-Europeans and Europeans are all represented on the staff, which contains many highly skilled men, operating and maintaining complex and costly machines in a way that earns high praise from experts visiting Fiji from overseas. In charge of these men, as factory

manager, is Mr. Dick Lobendahn, who followed his father in the service of the Fiji Times, starting work as a linotype apprentice in 1936. Thirteen of the staff have been with the Fiji Times or its associated job-printing department for more than 25 years, and five of them for more than 30 years.

Official reports on labour matters in Fiji show consistently that in each branch of its activities the Fiji Times and Herald Ltd. pays wages that are substantially higher than the average for the colony in the printing industry. One of the old-timers, Mr. Dick Abel, has given me some side-lights on an earlier wages situation. When he joined the Fiji Times, in November, 1918, the standard wage for the skilled printing engineers from overseas was £3/10/0d a week, paid in gold sovereigns. His own wage, as an apprentice, was 5/- a week, but one of his jobs, while learning the trade of compositor, was to distribute to the cases during the night the type which had been used in that afternoon's paper, and it was not unusual for him to earn, in overtime, one and half sovereigns a week — a sum which was, he says, in those days "pretty good" for a youth.

PRINTING METHODS

For many years, all the Fiji Times type was hand-set, and distributed after publication. The range of type was small, and in the early days, there was very little attempt at display. Headlines were small, and there were no cross-headings. The news was, in newspaper parlance, "set solid," and there were no eye-catching devices to lend emphasis. The ceremony of the signing of the Deed of Cession at Nasova on October 10th, 1874 was, I suppose, the biggest news story in the history of the Fiji Times. You will find it in the issue of October 14, half-way down column on Page 4, with a single-line heading, and all in the ordinary newspaper type, with no sub-headings.

The October 10 issue of the Fiji Times was published before the deed-signing ceremony, and from a presentation point of view it is the advertising columns that attract the attention most. There was a public notice, signed by the Mayor of Levuka, Otty Cudlip — "I beg to give notice of a public holiday for today in honour of the British flag being hauled up in Fiji." There were two large advertisements, on behalf of the Albion Hotel and the Criterion Hotel, inviting residents and visitors, with special reference to the blue jackets from the ships of war which had brought the British party to Fiji for the negotiations and ceremony, to come along and celebrate the great occasion. H. Norris & Co., proprietors of Little Wonder Store, "in the Lane at Totogo" announced, "Annexation now being a fact we are prepared to supply the public with goods at prices which defy competition." An advertisement headed "The Church of the Redeemer" read:

"Should the British flag be hoisted today, as expected, Special Services will be held tomorrow (Sunday) at the usual hours, at the Church of the Redeemer to invoke God's blessing and direction on a change which may materially affect us all, both spiritually and temporally. The collections will be devoted to the repairs of the church, which is sadly in need of them."

In 1920, Mr. Barker installed the first Fiji Times Linotype, and all type lines in the body of the newspaper have since been cast in such machines. After publication, the lines of type are melted down and the metal in due course returned to the line-casters to be re-set for the new day's paper. Until four years ago, headlines, and the larger type in locally composed advertisements, continued to be set by hand. Then, as part of the

plant modernisation that followed Mr. Robson's purchase of the Fiji Times, a Ludlow caster was installed, and the larger type, too, is now cast afresh for each day's newspaper or each new advertisement.

I have not been able to find out the kind of press on which the Fiji Times was first printed, but it would almost certainly be hand-operated. Even up to 30 years ago, the presses were, in emergency, hand turned. Just before World War II, Mr. Barker installed a second-hand Wharfedale press on which the Fiji Times was printed until November 1958. The paper sheets were hand fed into the press, and as one side was printed at a time, each sheet had to go through the machine twice. The papers were then hand-folded, and at this process, Malakai Soi, one of the oldest and most honoured of the Fiji Times employees, developed an astonishing speed and skill. Mr. Barker acquired an automatic folding machine in the late 1940's, but the printed papers were still fed into this machine by hand.

PLANT MODERNISATION

This equipment was entirely adequate while the circulation of the newspaper remained small, but by the time the paper was bought by Mr Robson nearly 3000 copies were being printed every day. Production was a long process, and the limit to expansion had been reached. This was demonstrated very forcibly in 1957, when Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna died. The Fiji Times then established a new record. A 16 page paper was issued and the demand was such that 6000 copies were printed. To produce this 16 page, 6000 issue required almost 20 hours of printing. With only a brief spell for meals, Peni Bera, another old employee still with the Fiji Times, fed sheet after sheet into the press for the whole of that time.

The transformation that has taken place in five years is shown by the fact that a sixteen page newspaper is now produced as a matter of course, on most Saturdays, at the rate of 4000 copies an hour. The paper runs through the machine from large reels, and the newspapers are printed, folded, counted and delivered in one continuous automatic operation. The change is the result of the decision which I mentioned earlier, by Mr. Robson and his associates after the purchase of the newspaper in 1956, to modernise the whole plant.

The trouble about printing machinery is that nobody seems to produce any half-crown models, and new equipment is costly. So the modernisation process had, necessarily, to be slow. Money had to be found, and here Mr. Robson called on his own resources, and those of friends in Australia, and on the Australia and New Zealand Bank Ltd. To everybody concerned, he communicated his personal faith in the future of Fiji and in the future of a re-vitalised Fiji Times. Any profits made were ploughed back into the business.

There had to be investigation, and decision, about right type of equipment to meet the particular needs of what Mr. Robson had in mind, and to provide for future growth. All the anxieties and difficulties that confront any new enterprise had to be faced and overcome. Mr. Robson's associates weren't always sure that he had done the right thing in tackling so big a job, but his faith and determination remained unshaken.

In all, in the past six years some £30,000 has been spent on new plant and equipment, and the process of modernisation continues. The main new piece of newspaper equipment is a Cossar flat-bed rotary press, an English made and designed machine with a world reputation as a

press for the efficient production of newspapers with circulations of up to 12,000 or 15,000.

To celebrate the installation of the Cossar, the Fiji Times produced a special edition on November 27, 1958. Part of the editorial of that day will serve to close this very brief, and, I am afraid, inadequate survey of the 93 years of life of the Fiji Times. The editorial looked not only back, but also ahead. It said:

"In dual fashion the Fiji Times is part of the history of Fiji. Its files record that history and on more than one occasion in nearly 90 years of life the Fiji Times has played no small part in helping to mould or change the course of the Colony's affairs. In a country which has not yet reached the stage of full self-government, either local or national, a free, independent press is of first importance as a means of expressing public opinion and of bringing affairs of public interest into the clear light of day. The Fiji Times is both free and independent. We are governed or influenced by neither prejudice or fear. Our voice will always be raised against injustice or foolishness, or the excesses of "brief authority", and our columns are a platform for the discussion of any topic which will help Fiji's citizens (including ourselves) to think out and follow the way of true progress for the good of all in Fiji."
