

Fiji: Future Imperfect? edited by Michael Taylor. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987. 126 pp, maps, figures, tables, notes, references, index. Paper, A\$11.95.

This collection by scholars based mainly at the Australian National University tries to cover the major "development dilemma" confronting Fiji in the 1980s and beyond. In his overview (Chapter 1), Taylor designates Fiji as "a development enigma" (1) which, despite its precarious overdependence on a monocultural sugar economy, has been able to attain a remarkable rate of economic growth while maintaining social and political stability, confounding those prophets of "doom and gloom" who had predicted "the imminent collapse" of Fiji's economy from a set of structural contradictions and social problems (2). Taylor argues that the country's overdependence on sugar has been converted to a comparative advantage, thanks to the Lomé Convention with its guaranteed EEC market and stabilized prices constituting a form of "aid with dignity." Should this EEC "aid with dignity" disappear for any reason, Taylor advises Fiji to switch strategies and strive to become a US-client state acting "as a beacon, guiding the way for US interests" (12) in the region in exchange for Japanese, Australian, or US "aid with dignity."

Brookfield's more critical examination of Fiji's comparative advantage in sugar production (Chapter 4), identifies the major shortcoming of such a resource-based development strategy as a result of the Fiji policymakers' blind following of the World Bank. This can be seen in their use of a US\$12

million World Bank loan to extend sugar acreage in the Seaqaqa Scheme even as the world market continued to contract because of falling demand and competition from substitutes. This further overdependence on sugar meant that a downturn in that industry's fortune was bound to have a ripple effect throughout the entire Fijian economy (56), as happened after 1984 despite the cushion provided by EEC "aid with dignity." By 1985, the world market price of a bag of sugar had plummeted "to rough equivalence with that of a bag of sand" (53) and "the proportion [of domestic exports] contributed by sugar and molasses fell from 81 per cent in 1980 to only 59 per cent in 1984 despite record production of cane and near-record production of sugar at 480,000 tonnes" (54).

Emigration and its ambiguous effects are the focus of Connell's discussion (Chapter 2). Indo-Fijians constitute a whopping 72 percent of emigrants compared with indigenous Fijians at a mere 3 percent. Official figures show a net outflow of 26,000 Indo-Fijians between 1983 and 1987, with a dramatic increase to 14,000 in 1987 from 4,400 the previous year. These figures seriously underestimate the extent of the Indo-Fijian exodus as they do not include those going on short-term visas to other countries and overstaying (M. Malik, *FEER* 13 Oct 1988, 27-28).

The Indo-Fijian exodus constitutes a severe brain drain, because those leaving tend to be the most educated and skilled workers in the professional and top management categories. The regime has moved to recruit "politically reliable" Australians and Asians (Chi-

nese and Filipinos) as well as Peace Corps and other Western aid personnel to plug this gap in the supply of educated skilled workers.

Ward (Chapter 3) is uneasy about the increasing intrusion of the "cash nexus" into Fijian rural life as well as the growing inequality of access to land that is leading to greater differentiation in wealth in the villages (43).

Taylor (Chapter 5) discusses the process of retrenchment of Fiji's foreign corporate sector leading to either joint ventures with local companies, monopolization of well-defined sectors, or subcontracting to local firms as they move to more profitable activities upstream. Foreign corporations are using their Fiji-based subsidiaries as one of their peripheral branches (ie, regional supply arm) "to mop up the market fragments of the South Pacific" (68). Britton (Chapter 6) provides further illustrations of this trend in Fiji's tourist sector, with greater vertical and horizontal integration of Australian-based tourist companies relying on pre-paid holiday packages. Kissling (Chapter 7) argues that a major obstacle to any move to revive regional cooperation in air transportation is the great dependence of Fiji's national carrier (Air Pacific) on Qantas's QANTAM reservation system, ground infrastructure, and other services involving heavy transfer pricing (96, 103).

Howard (Chapter 8) traces the three-phased history that lies behind the Fiji Trades Union Congress's abandonment of its apolitical tradition that led directly to the stunning electoral victory of the NFP-Labour Coalition, led by Timoci Bavadra, which brought to power a genuinely multiracial gov-

ernment and Fiji's first nonchiefly prime minister.

Except for Ward and Howard, the authors fail to illuminate historical or social processes to explain the dynamics underlying change or the achievement of social stability in Fiji. It has been precisely Fiji's integration into the capitalist world economy as a subordinate sugar (and copra) producing satellite through the mechanism of first, direct colonial control, and then "aid with dignity," anchored in a process of ethnically based internal class formation that forms the basis of the contemporary Fijian situation. This alternative view of structure and process is likely to provide a better explanation of the present Fijian economic and political impasse than an arbitrarily chosen and patronizing category like "aid with dignity." It would also have made Brookfield more cautious in depicting Fijian policymakers as blind followers of the World Bank line. It seems that the Fijian "chiefly" state used World Bank money to pursue the quite rational policy of extending and consolidating dominant-class power through political patronage. Unfortunately, the small select group controlling the state seldom shares the cost of its policy failure, but often quickly passes it on to the majority, who hardly have any say in its formulation or implementation.

Despite this criticism, the book provides a lot of solid data and contains important background material for anyone attempting to understand the present Fijian crisis.

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