

Fiji Times 26/6/78

Banabans after guarantees

The Banaban people are demanding 50 per cent of phosphate proceeds from Ocean Island.

The chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders, the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, said this yesterday after talks in Tarawa with the Gilbertese Government.

He said the Banabans were prepared to temporarily suspend their insistence on independence for their homeland, Ocean Island, if the Gilbertese Government meet certain conditions.

These included: a 50 /50 division of phosphate proceeds; amendments to legislation in marine and land resources to give protection to the Banabans; financial support from British in the form of guarantees and grants for the Rabi Council.

If the conditions were met it would enable the Gilberts to move smoothly into independence, he said.

But if the conditions were not agreed to the Banabans would keep up the pressure for separation of Ocean Island, thus creating a major obstacle to Gilbertese self-determination.

He said phosphate deposits on Ocean Island were due to expire in 1979.

The Banabans and the Gilbertese had, therefore, decided to establish a joint committee to negotiate with the British Phosphate Commissioners on the winding down of mining operations, and disposal of the commission's assets.

Fiji Times 14/3/79

The Fiji Times

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Fiji, Banaba and the Gilberts . . .

FIJI is being drawn into a situation in which it could find itself at odds with its regional neighbours over the political future of Ocean Island.

As the Ocean Island row flares, more and more Fiji organisations and individuals are becoming involved in anti-British and anti-Gilbertese acts.

The Fiji Government has not been exactly vociferous in denouncing the recent petrol bombings on Ocean Island.

And now Mr Apisai Tora and Mr Fred Caine, of the Fiji Council of Trade Unions, are off to Australia to ask unions there to "black ban" the Gilberts. Earlier, the FCTU had adopted a resolution at a trade union seminar at Lautoka attended by several overseas unionists to seek the support of foreign unions in this campaign.

Not so very long ago our own Government was denouncing efforts by Australian and New Zealand trade unions to involve themselves in dock and civil aviation strikes as outrageous interference in Fiji's internal affairs.

Are we now to hail the efforts of Mr Torà and Caine?

Chief Minister Ieremia Tabai, of the Gilberts, in comments published by the Fiji Times yesterday, questioned the right of Fiji unions to meddle in the Ocean Island issue.

He also referred to "foreign allies" of the Banabans — Fiji, we suppose — and remarked that his country did not want a Fiji colony on its doorstep.

His comments do not bode well for future relations with the Gilberts and possibly other Pacific countries.

ST
TIMES

4/5/78

Rabi Holdings sackings hit Home Enterprises

Home Enterprises Ltd, a subsidiary of the Rabi Group of companies, has attacked the action of Rabi Holdings Ltd in dismissing its managing director and group general manager.

Home Enterprises also says that the action by Rabi Holdings has resulted in its bank account being frozen and it would hold Rabi Holdings responsible for any resultant loss.

Following a meeting in

Suva yesterday the chairman and directors of Home Enterprises sent a letter to the directors of Rabi Holdings protesting their action in "attempting to remove" Mr Tekoti Rotan as managing director and "attempting to terminate" the appointment of Mr Boyan Crampton as managing director.

The letter also accused Rabi Holdings of unilateral interference in the financial affairs of Home Enterprises for allegedly trying to change the authorised signatories of Home Enterprises account at

Barclays Bank in Suva. As a result the account had been frozen," causing grave difficulties" to the company's operations.

Home Enterprises operates a tea-packing business, as well as being a copra trader.

The letter to Rabi Holdings was signed by the chairman, Rebo Terubea, and three directors, Buratake Tuateira, Taraanuea Abetai and Kition Kamata.

The manager of Home Enterprises, Mr Inia Vukialau, could not be reached for further comment yesterday.

*Fiji Times
19/5/78*

Big changes in Rabi Council

The Banaban Community Association has scored a sweeping victory in the Rabi Council of Leaders elections, ousting the old council backing the Rotan family.

The Rev Tebuke Rotan, the manager for the old council, was ousted by the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, who is tipped to become the new chairman of the council.

The chairman of the Banaban Community Association, Mr Henry Spring, said yesterday that Mr Tawaka had resigned from the church ministry to serve the Banaban community full-time.

Mr Tawaka was the most successful candidate, gaining most votes with about 450 defeating the strongest Rotan candidate in Tebuke Rotan by about 200 votes.

The former chairman of the Council of Leaders, Mr Rotan Tite, was not a candidate.

Rabi sources said the election result was a massive vote

against the old Rabi leaders by Banabans dissatisfied with the way their affairs had been run.

The eight successful candidates were seven committee members of the Banaban Community Association and one independent.

Two of them were members of the old council.

The new council, elected by overall vote but representing four different village areas, is:

- Tabwena village: Mr Tutara Tawaka, Mr Itintarawa Kanata.
- Uma village: Mr Bwenawa Urian, Mr Kaitanbare Kaburoro.
- Tabiang: Mr Kabure Kaibati; Mr Tekaie Tabuariki.
- Buakanikai: Mr Tebaiti Tawaka, Mr Teikabua Teaoiti.

Mr Spring, who was in Rabi for the election, said there was a large turnout of voters.

Voting was from May 12 to 17 and the count started on Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, new general manager, Mr Henry Bing, has been appointed to run the Rabi business company, Rabi Holdings.

Rabi losses blamed on shareholders

3/1 Times 6/5/78

Losses by Rabi Holdings had been caused by policies the shareholders imposed on the management, Mr Tekoti Rotan, said yesterday.

Mr Rotan was dismissed last week as managing director of Rabi Holdings. He has filed a Supreme Court writ against the other four directors, claiming wrongful dismissal.

"The company has fulfilled its obligations to provide jobs for our people but it has sometimes faced difficulties stemming from lack of commercial experience among the Banabans," he said.

He referred to allegations that Rabi Holdings had lost \$3 million.

There were no audited accounts to support this claim, he said.

"It is true, however, that there have been losses but these are not related to the company's trading activities."

The losses were mainly inter-company debts, most of which had been written off, he said.

Losses had also been caused by policies imposed on the management by the shareholders.

He said the company had had persisting difficulties in getting suitable accounting staff.

Because of the Banabans' lack of commercial experience, it was an unfortunate fact that today more non-Banabans were employed in the Rabi group of companies than Banabans.

Referring to a call by a Rabi Council of Leaders election candidate, the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, for a change in the management of Rabi Holdings, he said the shareholders had the right to change the company's management but such changes should be brought about through the correct procedures.

RABI COUNCIL HAS ROLE OF CARETAKER

Fiji Times
2/5/78

The Rabi Council of Leaders is functioning as a caretaker organisation until new members are elected, according to its manager, Reverend Tebuke Rotan.

The council's three-year term ended last December and an election of new members is due to be held on May 12, 13, 14, and 15.

An amendment to Banaban legislation is the reason for the electoral delay.

Mr. Rotan said the council has held meetings in the four Rabi Island villages to explain the position and there were no objections from those present.

"The council then held a

second round of village meetings at Rabi to explain these discussions and, once again, there were no objections to its caretaker role," Mr. Rotan said.

"Members of the Banaban Community Association were again present and raised no ob-

jections to the council's caretaker activities."

Mr. Rotan said council members emphasised that if the Banaban Community Association was dissatisfied with their work, it could take its objections to the highest Fiji Government level.

Fix time 8/5/78
classified ad

PUBLIC NOTICE

RABI HOLDINGS LIMITED
NOTICE is hereby given that an Extraordinary General Meeting of Rabi Holdings Limited will be held at Tabwe wa Village, Rabi Island at 10.00am on Monday, 15th day of May, 1978, and that the following business will be transacted therein:

AGENDA:

- 1 To inform members of the actions of the Directors in the matter of the termination of the employment of Tekoti Rotan.
- 2 To ratify the actions of the Directors.
- 3 To pass an ordinary resolution that Tekoti Rotan be requested to vacate his office as Director.
- 4 To pass an ordinary resolution that Tekoti Rotan's tenure of office as Managing Director be determined.

NOTE: On a show of hands every member present shall have one vote. A member may vote in person or by appointing another member by proxy to vote on his or her behalf. The form of proxy is contained in Article 65 of the Articles of Association and the properly signed instrument appointing a proxy shall be deposited at the registered office of the company not less than 48 hours before the time for holding the meeting or adjourned meeting.

Chairman,

BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

8.10

Sacked boss files writ for damages

3151
Times

28/4/78

Mr Tekoti Rotan, who was dismissed on Monday as managing director of Rabi Holdings Ltd, said yesterday he was wrongly removed from office by the other four directors.

He has filed a Supreme Court writ against the four seeking unspecified damages and a declaration that the action of the four directors and

the company secretary was invalid.

He is also seeking an injunction restraining the four directors and the secretary from interfering in his work.

The court is due to consider the injunction on Thursday next week.

Meanwhile, Mr Boyan Crampton said yesterday he was not accepting his termination as group general manager of Rabi Holdings Ltd.

RABI HOLDINGS BOSS IS DISMISSED

*Fiji Times
27/4/78*

The managing director of Rabi Holdings Ltd., Mr Tekoti Rotan, has been dismissed.

The company's general manager, Mr Boyan Crampton, a former National Federation Party Dove faction parliamentarian, was dismissed also on Monday, two days after he took office.

And on Tuesday night the other four directors of the company changed the lock of his offices to prevent him from entering.

Mr Rotan appointed Mr Crampton to succeed Mr Jim

Matson as general manager after the board of directors rejected his application for the position last month.

Fiji Times learned from reliable sources yesterday that

the company directors were surprised to find Mr Crampton in office when they attended a board meeting in Suva on Monday.

They immediately dismissed him and the four directors took over the company's management.

Mr Rotan could not be reached for comment yesterday.

However, it is believed that the entire staff of Rabi Holdings Ltd were sent home on Monday.

A visit to their offices yesterday showed that it was locked up.

Fiji Times 13/5/78

Banabans ask for Aust help

BRITISH OFFER IS 'PITIFULLY SMALL'

From
Fiji Times correspondent
CHRIS MILNE
in London

The Banabans from Ocean Island plan to seek more generous compensation from Australia and New Zealand for phosphate mined on their former homeland.

And they will seek money and expert assistance from Australia and New Zealand in restoring the island.

They will be backed by "Justice For The Banabans," a new organisation formed in London to back their demands.

The islanders had announced they will accept an offer of 6.25 million pounds (about \$F10 million) from the British Government.

But they will fight a "paternalistic" British Government condition that only interest, not the capital, be paid to the islanders.

The "Justice" group - with Tory MP Sir Bernard Braine as chairman - will wage "a vigorous campaign" on behalf of the Banabans.

Sir Bernard said: the Banabans want their island homeland back, and they want to restore it as far as they can.

"The Government's reluctant offer is a pitifully small fraction of benefits obtained from Banaban phosphate by Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

Last year, after the longest action in the history of the British High Court, the Banabans won their case against the British Phosphate Commissioners over failure to restore the ravaged island.

However damages of only about \$14,400 were awarded.

Under political pressure, the phosphate commissioners offered about \$1.25 million.

Subsequently, the British Government offered to set up a trust fund with \$10 million, producing an annual "pension" payment to the Banabans, who live on Rabi Island.

This week the islanders announced in London they would accept the offer, provided the capital was under Banaban control.

"Justice" campaign leaders said the sad story of the Banabans had begun with the discovery of rich phosphate deposits on their island.

"The Banabans were tricked into signing agreements they did not understand," campaign secretary Mr George Knapp said.

For 75 years, their island has been ravaged by phosphate mining which had subsidised Australian and New Zealand farmers to a total amount of \$275 million dollars on current purchasing power.

Next year phosphate mining was due to finish, leaving the island derelict and bereft of

the tropical fruits which had once flourished there.

The island had been captured by the Japanese during World War II, and the islanders sent to labour camps.

After the war, the 700 survivors had been "un-ceremoniously dumped" on Rabi Island by British.

Mr Knapp said the "Justice for the Banabans" campaign was aimed at achieving self-determination for the Banabans.

The islanders would remain associated with Fiji.

The campaign would also support the islanders' claim for control of the \$10 million trust fund.

And it would try to persuade the Australian and New Zealand governments to offer more generous compensation and expert help in restoring Ocean Island.

Although many Banabans would remain on Rabi Island, they wanted to establish a small community, on Ocean Island and rebuild "the land of their ancestors."

Fiji Times 11/1/79 *See you soon*
Kzac

WATERFRONT

Rabi family venture into fish industry

A RABI family went into a new venture last week with the new fishing boat *Nei Wirara*.

The venture, according to the family spokesman, Mr Tebuke Rotan, "is a pilot scheme".

"I was always advising the Rabi Council of Leaders to go into the fishing venture, but they hesitated to go into something unknown," Mr Rotan said.

Mr Rotan, a London-based advisor to the Rabi Council of Leaders, is at present on nine months leave.

"But I will be resigning soon because I think that I have played my part in London," he said.

"I thought that I would prove that it could be done," Mr Rotan said talking about the scheme.

"We grew up with the sea round us and fish as our main diet. There is no reason why we should not succeed," he said.

All the five people on board the vessel are related.

The cost of building the *Nei Wirara* was about \$38,000, which was paid from a Fiji Development Bank loan.

"We will sell all the fish we catch to the Fisheries

Department in Suva," Mr Rotan said.

Mr Rotan said that the department had been helping him with the scheme and he hoped that their help would continue.

The 38ft long boat is built of plywood and fibreglass.

It has a width of 12 feet, and a depth of seven feet.

It also has 120hp engine and a freezer space where six tons of fish can be stored.

It was built in 16 weeks at the Carpenters Industrial yard in Suva.



THE *Nei Wirara* being launched last week.

Fiji Times 5/5/79

COMPANY LOSSES WORRY BANABANS

Banabans of Rabi Island were worried about Rabi Holdings after reports of its losing \$3 million, a Rabi election candidate, the Rev. Tebaiti Tawaka, said yesterday.

"I think the feeling of the majority of people in Rabi is that there should be a change in the

leadership of Rabi Holdings," he said.

People in Rabi knew nothing of losses by Rabi Holdings until hearing reports late last month.

News of the losses was causing deep concern because the people of Rabi were looking to the company to provide them with jobs and

income when the revenue from the Ocean Island phosphates dried up.

There was a history of bankruptcies and failures among business ventures in Rabi and the people feared a similar end might befall Rabi Holdings.

Mr Tawaka said the Banaban people needed to have confidence

in their leaders.

"They want to be led in a proper way that suits the Banaban people," he said.

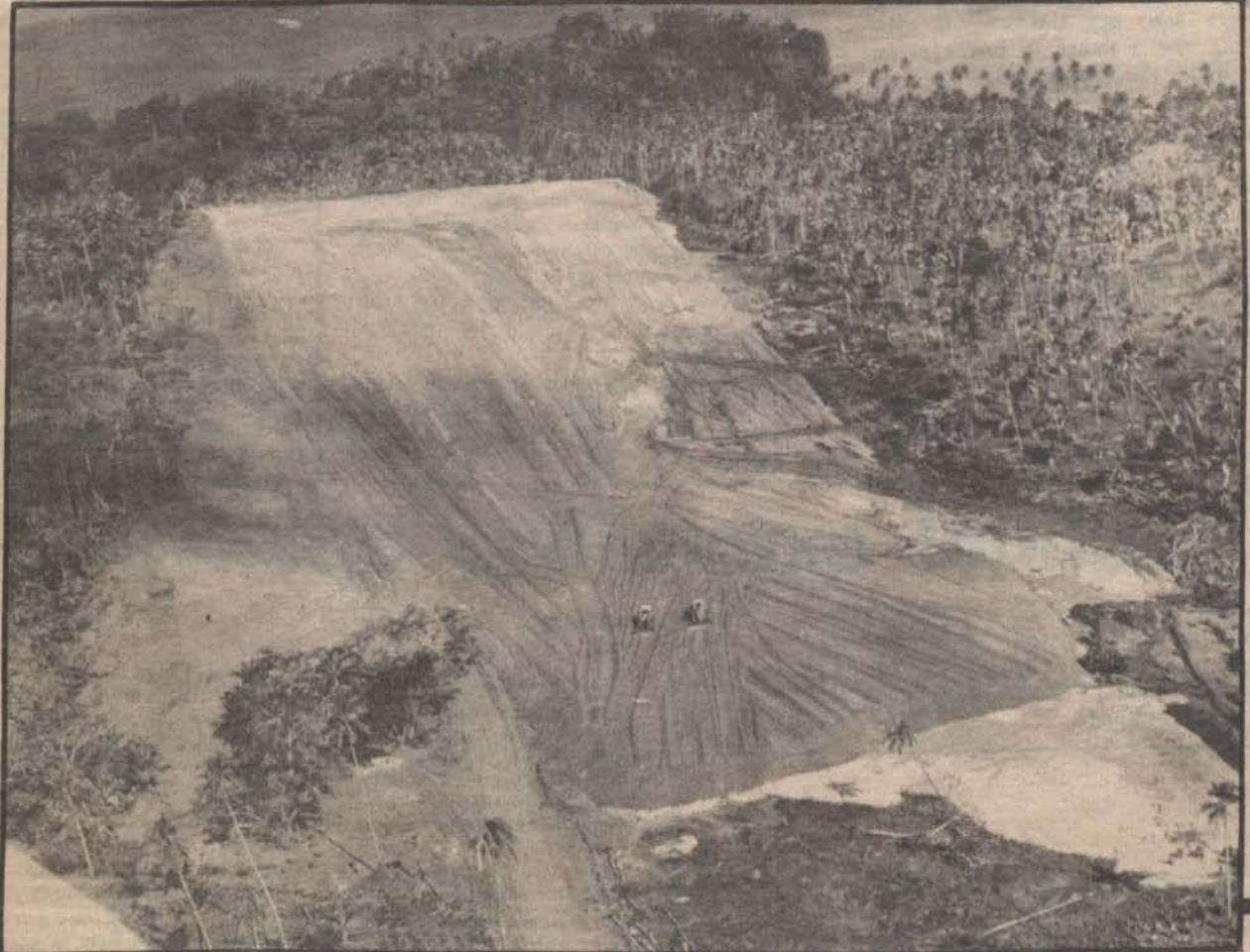
Mr Tawaka is among candidates now contesting elections for the Rabi Council of Leaders.

He said there had been vigorous campaigning.

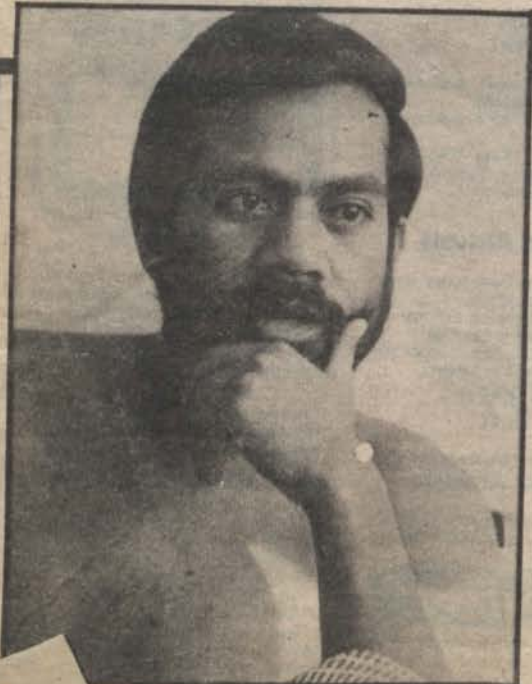
**Airstrip
takes
shape
in Rabi**

Want to fly there??

AT Tabiag, Rabi Island, work is in progress on a 2100ft airstrip for Rabi Holdings Ltd. The project is expected to be complete by the end of June. Fiji Air plans to operate chartered flights to the island. Picture By Nitin Lal, of the Fiji Visitors Bureau.



Fiji Times 30/9/78



Fiji 'not involved' in dispute

By
ROBERT KEITH-REID

Fiji agreed that the Ocean Island dispute was an internal matter between the Banabans and Gilbertese Government, the Chief Minister of the Gilberts, Mr Jeremaia Tabai, said in Suva.

He sees no reason why the two countries should quarrel over the demand by the Banabans, who are Fiji citizens, for Ocean Island's independence.

Nor does he know if the Banabans, who own the island, can carry out their threat to block independence for his country if they fail to get their wish met, but he thinks it unlikely.

Mr Tabai, who became Chief

Minister two months ago at the age of 29, attended the Forum meeting in Niue last week and on his way home this week visited Rabi Island, the Fiji home of the Banabans.

He discussed Ocean Island with the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who at times has acted as an intermediary between the Banabans and Gilbertese.

"He said he has been blamed for interfering in the internal affairs of the Gilbert Islands," Mr Tabai said.

"He said that the Banaban issue was an internal matter between the Gilberts and Banabans.

"I was very happy with the Prime Minister because I think we all feel that way."

Mr Tabai went to Rabi last weekend. He said he had not been expected but was "very pleased" with his reception there.

On Tuesday this week, however, the Rabi Council had told him in Suva that they would try to block a bill which the British House of Commons had to pass to give the Gilberts independence.

They had also said they would refuse to attend talks with the British Phosphate Commission to discuss plans for disposing of Ocean Island's phosphate mining equipment when phosphate ran out.

They had later said they might change their mind about this.

Mr Tabai said no Gilbertese government would accept the separation of Ocean Island.

"It is a question of national integrity," he said. He did not know if the Banabans had the power to delay independence, which was expected to come in mid-1979.

"All I can say is that they can make life more difficult for the Gilbertese and the UK," he said.

Britain had assured his people that there would be no delay.

If the Banabans did succeed, reaction from the Gilbertese would be "very bad."

GILBERTESE leader Jeremaia Tabai, in informal mood in his Suva hotel room.

Row over Rabi Council of Leaders

FJI TIMES
1/5/78

Members of the dissolved Rabi Council of Leaders still are acting as a duly elected council, according to the Banaban Community Association.

A spokesman for the association, which represents Banaban living in Rabi Island, said that a group of former councillors travelled to Suva at the weekend supposedly on council business and were claiming their expenses from the council.

The spokesman, Mr Henry Spring, who is chairman of the association in Suva Branch, said he received a call from the Rabi branch yesterday saying the group had left Rabi on Friday night without consulting anyone.

They had stayed at the Savusavu Travelodge on Friday night and were due to book into the Grand Pacific Hotel yesterday, he said.

The Rabi Council of Leaders was dissolved in December last year and a new election is to be held before the end of June.

The delay in new elections was because Parliament had first to approve amendments to the Banaban Election Ordinance.

Mr Spring said it was agreed at a general meeting in Rabi in January that the administration work of the council be carried on by Mr Tebuke Rotan, but any important issues were to be referred to a general meeting.

However, the old councillors gradually had re-assumed power and made decisions without calling a general meeting.

On April 21 the councillors met at Mr Rotan's house in Rabi and the chairman of the association's Rabi branch, Mr Itintarawa Kamata, led a march to the house and declared that the meeting was invalid.

It was agreed again that any business would be referred to a general meeting, Mr Spring said.

The Fiji Times

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109th Year No. 59

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 1979

24 PAGES

12c

ANGRY BANABANS REJECT LUARD'S PLAN

From

SEONA MARTIN on Rabi Island

An emotional and angry meeting of more than 1000 Banabans on Rabi Island yesterday rejected the latest three-point plan from the British Government for the future of their ancestral home, Ocean Island (Banaba).

With tears streaming down her face, a middle-aged Banaban woman, Makin Corrie, begged British Government representative Mr Evan Luard to ask the Queen to give back "worthless" Ocean Island so she could die there.

Yesterday's meeting with Under Secretary of State for the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Luard, was the first between the ordinary Banaban people and a high British Government representative.

The Banabans and the British delegation sat on mats in the community hall.

Mr Luard, the British High Commissioner, Viscount Dunrossil, and two Aides drove to the hall at Nuku village through lines of silent Banabans, all wearing black armbands.

The meeting was punctuated by cries of "Lies, lies," "No, keep your money," and at one stage the crowd leaped to their feet and shouted "Separation."

Mr Luard's request for a private meeting with Banaban leaders to discuss his proposals was refused.

He then put proposals for safeguards for the Banabans within the Gilbert Islands on independence.

These were:

- That Banaba should have an island council with a full measure of self-government on the island.
- That there should be an international commission to keep the Banaban situation under a review and make



MR LUARD (left) with Banaban representatives on Rabi Island yesterday. — Decisions had already been reached — Page 3.

recommendations on its future.

- The some outside power, perhaps Fiji, should undertake to safeguard the rights of the Banabans.

The chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders, the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, rejected the proposals and said the Banabans had heard them all before. They wanted only to discuss separation.

He presented Mr Luard with a letter accusing the British Government of betrayal.

The letter said Mr Luard was forbidden to discuss the only matter the Banabans wanted to raise — autonomy and self-government.

"You not only do us a great injury, you mock us as well," Rev Tawaka said in the letter.

"There is no turning back now from the road we have taken. We are now a people fighting for our very survival as a distinct community.

"The British Government should not underestimate the depth of our commitment to this struggle.

"The Banabans, men, women and children, are as one in the battle for freedom."

Mr Luard "advised" the 150 people leaving Rabi for Banaba in the freighter Cenpac Rounder yesterday to conduct themselves in an "orderly way."

"It would be ill-advised to attempt to damage operations or equipment because the effect could be that the Gilberts Government would be obliged to arrest those concerned," Mr Luard said.

The crowd roared in anger as he said this. Fiji Member of Parliament, Mr Fred Caine, who attended the meeting as Banaban political adviser, said Mr Luard's comments were "ill-advised and inflammatory."

They just added more tension. After the meeting Cenpac Rounder, sailed for Suva and then Banaba with 154 Banabans aboard.

A Banaban spokesman said another group of 150 Banabans would sail for Ocean Island in three weeks time.

\$15,899

A generous gift of \$1250 yesterday took The Fiji Times' Soldiers Trust Fund total to within \$100.15 cents of \$16,000.

The \$1250 came from the Association of Banks in Fiji.

This represents \$250 each from the ANZ Bank, Barclays Bank, the Bank of Baroda, the Bank of New South Wales and the Bank of New Zealand.

The chairman of the Association of Banks in Fiji, Mr E.A. Griffith said: "We know that your appeal is to meet a real need in the community at this time and we wish you every success with it."

Gifts can be sent to the Soldiers Fund, P.O. Box 1167, Suva, or placed in any Five Fives box in Fiji.

All gifts will be acknowledged in The Fiji Times.

The fund was set up to help dependents of any RFMF soldiers hurt or killed during their stay in the Middle East with the United Nations peace-keeping forces.

ISSUES

EMPLOYERS.... "sit together and talk."
 SUGAR SURPLUS ... "Not serious problem."
 THE BANABANS ... "Fiji is in a very difficult position ..."
 INDIAN ALLIANCE ... "personality first; ideology second."

This is the Prime Minister speaking in the conclusion of his frank interview with the editor of The Fiji Times.

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- ★ Subject to Director of Lands consent.
- ★ Inspection by appointment only.

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 TITLE — CT 13611
 ZONING — Commercial B
 AREA — 28.9 Perches

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- ★ Concrete ground floor, upper wooden construction

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 NEI MON — \$15,000 cash

- ★ NEI KUANA — 125 Gross Tons
 — 2 x 152 H.P. Diesel Engines and one Auxiliary
- ★ NEI MON — 32.87 Gross Tons
 — 2 x 160 H.P. Diesel Engine

Further information available on request.

Contact: D. Maw, Receiver, Rabi Holdings Limited — 22338; 22929.

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MEAD ROAD, Nabua
\$54,000 cash

- ★ CT 13798, Lot 15 DP 3516
- ★ Commercial C
- ★ 1 Rood 54 perches
- ★ 3 storey building 30' below road level
- ★ Concrete construction with 3 flats each 2 bedrooms and facilities.
- ★ Vacant block adjoining on CT 13737 with 39.6p.

FOR SALE
2 AMY STREET TOORAK
\$60,000 cash

- ★ CT 5473, Lot 1 DP 271
- ★ Residential B, 16 perches, with 2 storey concrete building, 3 x 2 bedroom flats on top floor and bulk store and 1 x 2 bedroom flat at rear.

FOR SALE
29 KIKAU STREET
\$45,000 cash

- ★ CL 1449, Lot 4
- ★ Residential B, 35 perches, 2 concrete buildings with 4 flats

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★ Ford 3 Ton Truck	\$1750
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Valuable property in central Suva.

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Receiver for Rabi Holdings

The Rabi Island Council of Leaders yesterday appointed a Suva accountant as receiver of its investment company, Rabi Holdings Ltd.

He is Mr David Maw, a chartered accountant with Peat Marwick Mitchell & Co.

The announcement follows an earlier statement from Rabi Holdings in September last year that the company

had lost an estimated \$4,500,000.

When Rabi Holdings was formed about seven years ago it invested the royalties from Ocean Island phosphate into shipping, a grocery store, real estate, and engineering but had managerial problems and lost money.

SIST TIMES 4/1/79

Fiji Times 3/3/79

Banabans moved to Tarawa

A group of Banabans arrested after a bomb-throwing incident have been moved from Ocean Island (Banaba) to Tarawa, capital of the Gilbert Islands, for trial.

The British High Commission in Suva confirmed the move yesterday.

A telegram from Deputy Chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders, the Reverend Kaitangare Kaburoro, received in Suva yesterday said 14 Banabans, including himself, another councillor and the assistant secretary, had been arrested and detained until the trial, which was now set for March 19.

Meanwhile, another 150 Banabans are preparing to leave Suva for Ocean Island in the Nauruan vessel Cenpac Rounder next week.

Fiji Member of Parliament Mr Fred Caine, who went with a group to the island last month, said in Suva yesterday he would fly to join the new group next weekend.

The Banabans want the British phosphate mining operations on Ocean Island to halt and want independence for the island.

The British Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Evan Luard, is coming to Fiji on Tuesday, a spokesman for the Banabans said yesterday.

He would have talks with Banabans and Fiji Government representatives.



OUR first check through Fiji that there is no winner.

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Bosco may play — Back

Fiji Times 17/5/79

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Gilberts before independence there will be bad feelings in the new nation and in this part of the world. Meanwhile resentment against Fiji is growing.

D. CAMPBELL
Toorak.

not too distant future the winds of justice may unleash to them what is theirs by birthright.

As for the self-proclaimed evangelist who had to brave the fury of Cyclone Meli in the Sigatoka sandhills fasting and meditating for the Banaban cause, I must salute him with heartfelt gratitude.

Indeed, I spent a sleepless Tuesday night worrying and praying for his safety lest he be buried by the sand or washed away by the tortuous waves below.

Let us hope that Mr Caine's actions were solely and genuinely for the sake of these forgotten people and not as a leverage to some other underlying and long term motive.

J.O. VEIDREYAKI.
Lautoka.

Trouble in Gilberts

Sir. — I wish to draw your attention to an incident I witnessed which indicates the worsening of the once-good relations that used to exist between Fiji and the Gilberts.

I am a Fiji citizen and have just returned from Ocean Island. On the night of Saturday 7/4/79 a party of Banabans and Fijians were drinking yagona outside the place where I was living. Some of them had returned from a dance when trouble had started.

A party of Gilbertese police arrived and began asking questions. They recognised two Fijians as Fijians and in my presence and picked on them.

The Gilbertese do not drink yagona as we do. The Gilbertese policemen saw the yagona bowl and said: "It is this thing that keep bringing you together," and kicked it over. The Gilbertese police then arrested six from our group.

When these six were taken away from our verandah none of them were injured but all complained of police brutality in the cell when I visited them later.

This incident supports the Banaban view that if Ocean Island is not separated from the

Helping the Banabans?

Sir. — The fears and aspirations of the Banaban people are well founded and I sympathise with their predicament.

Indications are that they may be fighting a losing battle but nevertheless I still pray to the Almighty that some day in the

Siji Times 22/11/72.

Banaban claims head agenda

LONDON. — The struggle of 2500 Banaban Islanders for separate statehood reaches top level negotiation today when the London conference on the future constitution of the Gilbert Islands opens in Marlborough House.

The Banaban's fight has already won them top billing on the conference agenda, and their nine-man delegation has representative status, instead of the observer role they were originally offered.

The conference is the latest stage in what the British government calls the "de-colonising" of its Pacific Island territories, and follows the granting of independence to the Solomons and Tuvalu.

The British Government has made it clear it wants the Banaba (or Ocean Island) issue dealt with quickly and fully.

It is unlikely, however, that there will be discussion on the Banabans' claims for compensation for phosphate mining on their island home.

Two court actions on this issue have failed and the time for appeal has elapsed, sources say, but an offer of \$10 million in compensation is still open. — AAP

Fiji Times 8/2/78

Banabans prepare to battle on

The Banaban people in Fiji will make fresh attempts to gain support for their struggle about the future of the homeland, Ocean Island (Banaba) in a series of demonstrations in Suva next year.

The new move was announced yesterday by the Banaban's legal adviser, Suva lawyer Mr Karam Ramrakha.

In a constitutional conference in London last month on Gilbertese independence the Rabi Council of Leaders delegation walked out and refused to sign the formal report of the conference.

Mr Ramrakha said they were stunned and shocked at a ruling by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, that Ocean Island, their traditional home, would remain territorially part of the Gilberts.

The delegation will now have discussions with the Banabans in Fiji to decide the next step.

Mr Ramrakha said the Banabans rejected the right of any third party to decide their future and they held Britain responsible.

They would approach the Fiji Government for assistance.

The Rabi Council of Leaders was still in Britain seeking support and meeting friends and contacts.

He said the walkout and subsequent boycott by the Rabi Council of Leaders meant that for the first time a Constitutional Conference ended on an incomplete note with one party not signing the formal report.

The four suggestions put forward by the Banaban representatives were:

- Banaba to be the home of the Banabans who would own the land in fee simple in perpetuity, and be entitled to maritime fishing rights, and ownership of minerals therein. (This was rejected).
- The Banabans, under their local government in Fiji (the Rabi Council of Leaders), to control non-Banaban presence on Ocean Island. Mr Ramrakha said some half-hearted concession was made to this but it was suggested that the Closed District Ordinance be used. (This legislation was brought in by the British to control presence of Banabans in Ocean Island in 1975).

- Arbitration machinery to consider and remedy any breaches of the first two suggestions. Some concession was made to this, it being suggested by all parties that Fiji should play a hand.

- An inbuilt constitutional right to secede. This was rejected without discussion by the Gilberts.

Meanwhile, a report from London said a newly-launched "Justice for the Banabans" campaign had warned the British Government against "riding roughshod" over the Pacific Islanders.

The campaigners, who include Members of Parliament from all the main British parties, said at a news conference that the Banabans were not prepared to allow the British Government to shuffle off their responsibilities. "The word is littered with the fragments of torn-up institutions," they said in a statement.

"Britain joined Banaba to the Gilberts in 1916 without consulting the Banabans," the statement added. "But in 1947 to induce the Banabans to make a second home on the Fiji Island of Rabi to make way for phosphate mining on Ocean Island, Britain guaranteed the Banabans the right to return to and live upon their Banaban home at any time in the future."

The campaign group, which is headed by Conservative politician Sir Bernard Braine, added in its statement:

"Only the separation of Banaba from the Gilberts can safeguard the Banabans' right to their homeland.

"The Banabans, who are Fiji citizens and as such subjects of Queen Elizabeth, wish Banaba to remain, at least for the time being, a separate British colony rather than become part of a new republic of the Gilberts.

"The 'Justice for the Banabans' campaign has warned the Government that if it is bent upon riding roughshod over the Banabans' legitimate rights it will create tension and unhappiness in the Pacific.

"In addition, the Government will encounter unprecedented difficulties with the passage of the Gilberts Independence Bill in Parliament.

"The trustees of this campaign will not permit the ultimate betrayal of Britain's obligations towards the much abused Banaban people.

Fiji Times 23/11/78

Banabans state case in London

'Ocean Island still our home'

LONDON. — The Banaban people had undoubted rights and claims to Ocean Island which the British Government must negotiate with them and not with any third party, the Gilbert Islands Constitutional Conference was told yesterday.

The Banaban's leader, the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, addressing the opening session, said: "We are dispossessed, uprooted people seeking the return of our ancient and spiritual home, Ocean Island. This has been our home from time immemorial, and it remains our home today."

He said the Banabans invitation to the conference and their participation were eloquent proof that their rights and claims were recognised.

"The issue must be discussed between the Banabans and the British Government and resolved before any constitution of the Gilbert Islands could be drawn up," he said. "In no other way could the solemn undertakings which Britain gave to the Banabans concerning their rights be ensured."

The Banabans were their own masters from time immemorial, largely unconnected with and entirely independent of the Gilbert Islands, he said.

As such they were annexed as a separate colony by Britain in 1900, and it was not until 16 years later that it was decided by British officials to merge Ocean Island with the Gilberts for the convenience of the British Government.

"My people suffered privations and hardships in the Second World War, and a British judge has produced in his recent judgment a chronicle of our sufferings and injustices," Mr Tawaka continued.

"For historical reasons, the majority of us now live in Rabi Island, Fiji, after the war, Her Majesty's Government took deliberate steps to prevent our return to Ocean Island.

"We thus face the somewhat unusual situation that while we are citizens of Fiji we have come to London, where sovereignty over our ancestral homeland lies and has done for 78 years to seek the return of our homeland."

Mr Tawaka said Ocean Island should become a separate entity from the Gilbert Islands and remain a colony while the issue of the Gilberts' independence was discussed and resolved.

He said the Banabans enjoyed good relations with Fiji and its people. "Fiji has become a second home for us," he said, "but our hearts are in Ocean Island and we yearn for the day when our island home will be ours and we will rule our own island and shape our destiny as a free, independent people."

The Banaban issue is the first matter to be discussed at the Gilberts conference, which will go into private session after yesterday's opening, and is expected to last about a fortnight.

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THE FIRST TOUCHDOWN AT RABI

RABI Island schoolchildren rush to meet the first aircraft to land on their new airstrip. For many it was the first time they had seen a plane. Fiji Times chief photographer Anne Livingston was one of the passengers on the flight to the new Rabi Island airstrip when Fiji Air made a trial run yesterday. The strip will open up air services for the 3000 people of Rabi, off Buca Bay, between Vanua Levu and Taveuni and 250 miles north-east of Suva. The strip, at Pabiang village, was built by the Rabi people at a cost of \$150,000. Everyone on the island contributed, but they hope to recover some of the cost from the Fiji Government. Fiji Air will fly an Islander service three times a week, charging \$36 for a one-way fare.

