

## Justice for the Banabans

*From Sir Bernard Braine, MP for Essex, South East (Conservative)*

Sir, Your leading article "The Disappointments of the Banabans" (August 4) rightly emphasizes the moral injustices suffered by this people. In the event, recourse to law did not wipe away these wrongs.

Last December the Vice-Chancellor found that the British Phosphate Commissioners were liable to pay the Banabans damages for their failure to replant a certain acreage of their devastated homeland of Ocean Island. In awarding damages last week, he presumably had his reasons in law for rejecting the Banabans' demand for £50,000 per acre and for ordering £50 per acre instead.

As for the case which the Banabans brought against the Crown, the Court deemed itself powerless to award the Banabans a penny.

Whatever the legal sense of these judgments (and the Court of Appeal could have other views) they have no bearing whatsoever on the moral issue. The Vice-Chancellor explicitly recognized this when he directed the Attorney-General's attention to the wrongs done to the Banabans which his Court was unable to right.

The British Government's offer was not made, as suggested by the Judge, as compensation for past grave breaches of the Government's higher trust towards the Banabans. Indeed, Dr Owen subsequently denied any such liability on the part of the Crown. Instead, the payment is designed to provide the Banabans with a future annual pension of £225 per head to save them from becoming destitute as a result of past British misdeeds.

Before the Banabans were forced to proceed with their actions against the Government and the Phosphate Commissioners, Mr John Lee, MP, and I, after an on the spot investigation, urged Mr Callaghan, then Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, in a joint report submitted in April, 1975, that redress would have to be made to this wronged community irrespective of the pending High Court actions. Our advice was ignored.

Over two years later, and at an expense to the taxpayer for which Parliament will surely expect an account, all that has been achieved is a detailed narration of the contemptible treatment this small people have received at British hands over a long period of time. Indeed, the inability of the High Court to remedy the injustice done to the Banabans seems likely to drive them to the Court of Appeal where we will once again have the painful experience of listening to this shameful story.

What can now be done? May I suggest that the Government should grasp the opportunity of bringing to an end this dismal colonial episode by agreeing to the terms upon which the Banabans accepted Dr Owen's "ex-gratia" offer. These terms were:

(i) that the capital sum of £6.5 million be paid into a fund within the control of the Rabi Council of Leaders (the elected representatives of the Banaban people) with advice from the Government of Fiji;

(ii) that Ocean Island be separated forthwith from the Gilbert Islands and administered by a Commissioner directly responsible to the Secretary of State until such time as a reasonable constitutional settlement is reached; and

(iii) that the right of the Gilberts Colony Government to tax Banaban phosphates be deemed to have ceased as from March 31, 1977, irrespective of the date upon which separation is formally arranged, and the British Phosphate Commissioners be instructed by the partner governments to adjust payment of the proceeds accordingly.

"Should these conditions be fulfilled", as the Banabans go on to say, "they will enable the Banaban people to reestablish a presence on their ancestral homeland and, with the aid of the capital which will become available together with the healing powers of nature, restore at least a part of the ravages of colonial exploitation."

It goes without saying, of course, that the Government, in accepting these conditions, should in fairness ensure that the Gilberts Government are compensated for the loss of phosphate revenue and that the separation of Ocean Island will be without prejudice to its final constitutional status.

We would then, and only then, be able to leave the Pacific with our heads high.

Yours sincerely,  
BERNARD BRAINE,  
House of Commons.

August 5.

*FTI TIMES 15/1/77*

# Banabans set to get \$10m from UK

LONDON. — The Banaban community was likely to receive another \$A10 million in phosphate revenue from the British Government, a Foreign Office official told the House of Commons yesterday.

Mr Evan Luard, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was answering a written question on the intentions of the Government following the High Court judgment on phosphate mining on Ocean Island.

In the judgment, Mr Justice Megarry dismissed the Banabans' 21 million sterling claim but said they should get damages.

"The Government will continue its consultations with the governments of Australia, Fiji and New Zealand as well as the Government of the Gilbert Islands and the Banaban leaders in its efforts to reach a solution to the problems affecting the future of the Banaban community," Mr Luard told the House. — AA<sup>D</sup>-Reuter.

**NEWSPAPER**

**review**

*Cont. follow this - what the  
\$10 million for? R*



# Atoll Pioneer

NO 10

29 March 1979

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## DAY TO DAY COURT PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE BANABANS

### MONDAY

Fifteen Banabans appeared at the High Court in Betio this morning charged with arson.

Before the court proceeded, the counsel for the defence, Mr. Ram Rakha of Fiji, made several preliminary submissions claiming that Banaba, for Administrative purposes, was annexed to the then Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony.

Mr. Ram Rakha said that British move which granted the Gilbert Island's self governing status in 1975 was illegal. He further stated that according to the 1947 covenant, the British Government granted the Banabans the right to

enter and live on Banaba whenever they like.

Because of this, he said that the venue for the court case should be at Banaba rather than Betio. Also on this ground, he intended to prove that the High Court of the Gilbert Islands has no jurisdiction over anything that took place on Banaba.

His intention was to prove that all cases tried in the court at Banaba between the years 1947 & 1975 were illegal.

Counsel for the crown then asked for an adjournment stating that he is not aware of the 1947 covenant, and asked leave to study this document first before

they can proceed any further.

The court was accordingly adjourned.

Gilbert Islands and the first of the seven cases against the Banabans was then heard.

The first case involved 15 Banabans charged with arson.

### TUESDAY

On Tuesday, the Attorney General summed up the crown's position on the question after which Chief Justice, O'Brien Quinn, ruled that the venue should be the High Court at Betio and deferred his ruling on the question of jurisdiction until 1.30 in the afternoon.

This afternoon, the Chief Justice made a ruling claiming that Banaba is within the Jurisdiction of the High Court of the

### WEDNESDAY

The High Court of the Gilbert Islands during its hearing today, adjourned the case until April 19 on the application of counsel for the defence seeking more time to study his client's statements.

The Crown raised no objection and all the accused received extension of bail.

## GI'S APPLICATION TO HIGH COURT ADJOURN

The application by the Gilbert Islands Government in the High Court, Fiji seeking an injunction against the Rabi Council of Leaders from causing or procuring any unlawful

act on Banaba contrary to the utilisation of Mineral Resources on the island including the business of BPC has been adjourned until Tuesday 10 April.

The Court how-

ever ordered that the Lawyer for the defendant should undertake to convey a message to the Chairman and Secretary of the Rabi Council that the defendant should not take any steps

to counsel aid or abet council members and members of the community in the commission of any unlawful act on Banaba while the application for an injunction is proceeding.



# Rabi Councils Dancers Performing on Banaba

Pictures by Ma Kin Chu





# Atoll Pioneer

NO 9

22 March 1979

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## Salaries Review Withdrawn - To be replaced with new revised

### 'package' offer.

A SPOKESMAN from the Ministry of Labour and Manpower said today that in view of the unacceptability of the "package" offer in the Report of the Salaries Review Commission to both the Public Employees Association and the BKATM Union the Government had agreed that the offer be withdrawn.

The views expressed by representative bodies and their proposal have been considered by the Government. The Ministry of Labour and Manpower has been given the task of endeavouring to formulate a revised "package" offer based on the recommendations of the Salaries Review Commission and the known views of staff representative bodies. The problems are being considered and it is hoped that in the near future a satisfactory solution will be found. The Government is as concerned as staff and employees to bring about

an acceptable settlement.

It will be remembered that as part of the exercise in drawing up new National Conditions of Service the government decided to conduct a salary wage and structural review of the Public Service and other public bodies.

Appreciating the concern that conclusions should be fair and soundly based, the Government decided that an independent Commissioner from outside the Gilbert Islands should be appointed to conduct the review. Mr. R.P Fry, a Senior Inspector of the Australian Public Service Board, the central personnel authority of the Australian Public Service, was appointed Commissioner. He was assisted in the review by three local assessors none whom is a public servant or con-

nected with public bodies.

The terms of reference of the Commissioner were wide and varied. He was to have regard to the likely economic circumstances of the country during the next decade, the social structure of the country and of attitudes of the Gilbertese community in relation to rewards for work, the essential requirements for efficient services and the cost and standard of living in the Gilbert Islands.

Wide publicity was given to the need for Trade Unions, Staff Associations and other interested persons to submit representations on any matters they wished the Commissioner to consider. Employees were welcome to make individual submissions to the Commis-

Cont'd on P2

## BANABAN

## TRIAL

## EXTENDED

## A WEEK

THE BANABANS, at the peak of their struggles to separate their home land - Banaba - from the rest of the Gilbert Islands, decided to take things into their own hands and travelled all the way from Rabi in Fiji to Banaba and demanded that all mining operations should cease immediately.

The British Phosphate Commissioners (BPC), the company which does the mining did not take notice of th-

Cont'd P2



# Salaries Review

Cont'd from P1

sioner as well as through their Associations or Unions.

The Commissioner spent over two months in the Gilbert Islands and had discussions with Ministries, representative bodies and people from all sectors of employment both established and unestablished. Following this he recommended a "package" deal which he hope would satisfy all parties.

Government accepted the Report and recommendations but it become apparent that sta-

# Withdrawn

ff and employee representative bodies could not accept the Commissioner's offer as a "package deal!" They made counter proposals for a salary and wage revision which generally may not put to to right anomolies or standardise conditions of service. These are important and need to be sorted out with a salaries increase.

The Ministry is concerned to resolve the difficulties as soon as possible.

# BANABAN TRIAL...



Some of the 150 Banabans arriving at Banaba last Friday.

Cont'd from P1

air demand and the Banabans, led by Kaitangare Kaburoro, Vice Chairman of the Rabi Council, erupted in flam-

es along with some BPC mining installations and machinery.

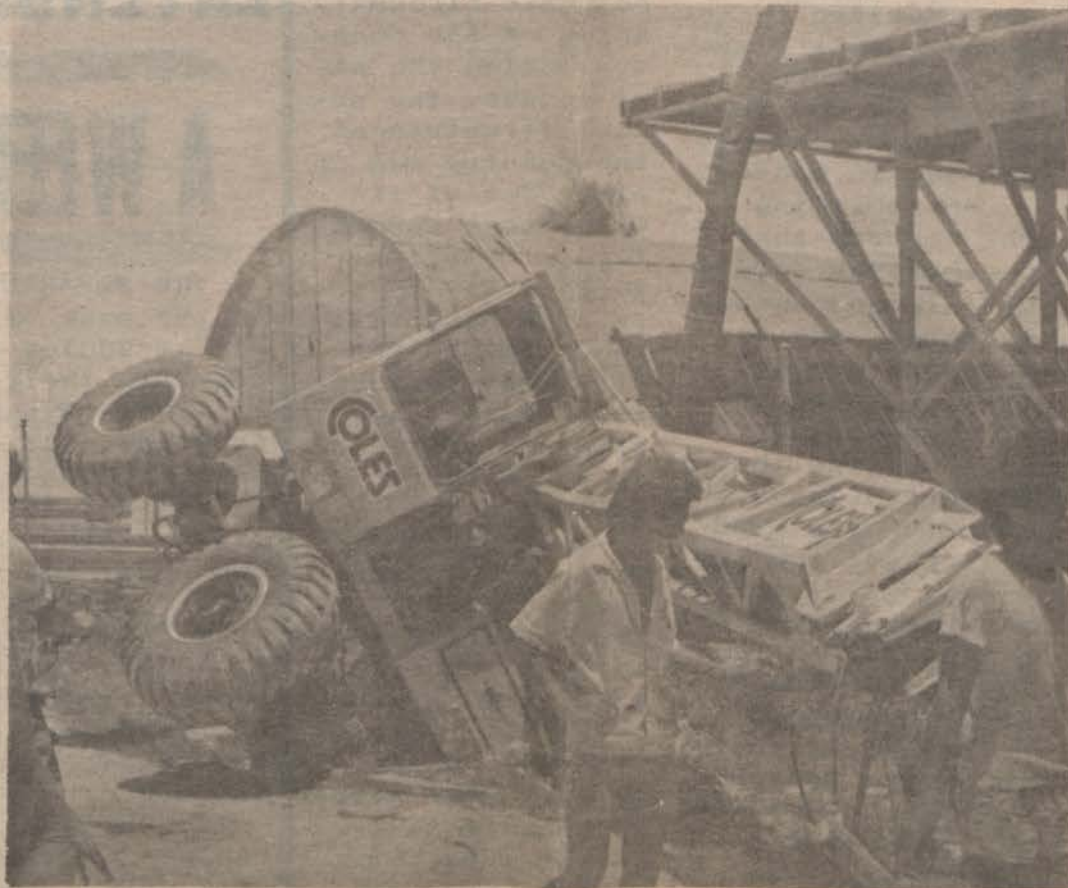
And now these Banabans are awaiting trial in the Gilbert Islands High Court at Betio for charges ranging from arson to taking part in a riot.

The case was to be heard last Monday but counsel for the defence did not turn up and the Banabans applied for an extension. This was granted on the understanding that the case will be heard this Monday with or without the defence counsel.

Meanwhile over 150 Banabans, man and women of all ages and children, arrived at Banaba last Friday. The group included a dancing team and a string band.

It was reported that a further 150 will be carried on the next trip of the "Cenpac Rounder."

# Weekend Casualty



It was too close a tragic end for the driver of the above crane. The crane almost toppled over when one of its wheels dropped in a hallow ground close to the Bairiki wharf on Saturday morning.



# Atoll Pioneer

No 7 8 March, 1979

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## BANABANS TO APPEAR IN HIGH COURT

A GROUP of 14 Banabans, including the Vice Chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders, Mr. Kaitangare Kaburoro are due to appear at the High Court in Tarawa on March 19 on several charges connected with petrol bomb attacks on mining installations and machinery on Banaba about two weeks ago. A police spokesman said these men are being remanded in custody to await trials on March 19.

The group arrived in Tarawa on T.S.Teraaka on Monday from Banaba where they had earlier appeared at the Banaban Magistrates Court.

Pioneer correspondent on Banaba said charges alleged against them were arson, criminal trespass conspiracy to commit a

## Ministerial Tour on Constitutional Talks

A PARTY comprising the Minister for Finance, the Hon Tiwau Awira, the Minister for Education, Training and Culture, the Hon Teatao Teannaki and a number of Government officials paid a visit to all villages in North Tarawa last week.

The tour which was aimed at informing people about constitutional changes on independence and financial matters was done

BY

KABURE MOMO

by car and on foot. The opportunity was also taken to find out the problems of the people and thus establishing closer links with the rural community.

The Hon. Teatao Teannaki spoke mainly on constitutional changes and he announced the date of Independence - 12th July 1979.

One major change that will come into operation is

(CONT'D ON P2)

felony and taking part in a riot.

Other Banabans, including those released on bail, who have been instructed by the Banaban Magistrates Court to appear in the High Court in Tarawa did not board Teraaka on Sunday.

Their arrests were made following petrol bomb attacks on phosphate mining installations on Thursday night in mid-February.

More than 30 men on foot and in landrovers, moving under cover of darkness, struck at target areas within half-an-hour

of each other.

The sabotage followed the British Phosphate Commissioners' rejection of an ultimatum by the Banaban people to stop all mining operations by 6pm on Thursday.

Explosions lit the sky during the attack and in half an hour three huge excavators, an hydraulic control box and two crushers were in flames, according to reports from the island. Police and BPC Gilbertese workers battled for half an hour to extinguish the fires.

The BPC's ma-

nager on the island burned his right hand while trying to fight a fire in the hydraulic control box. Two other Banabans were hurt in the raid.

Police ambushed a Banaban vehicle and fired tear gas at it. The five occupants were arrested after they abandoned the car.

About 100 more Banabans have left Fiji on the chartered Nauruan vessel, "Cen Pac Rounder," to strengthen their presence on Banaba. They are due on Banaba at the weekend.

## 1 tonne of Skipjack Caught

Story & Pictures on Pages 10&11



# Banabans bomb mining plant

NZ Press Association



BANABANS on Ocean Island prepare patrol bombs before attacking phosphate mining installations.

BANABANS WILL continue with ultimate efforts to stop phosphate mining operations on Banaba.

Their first raid on mining installations and machinery resulted in several of their members remanded in custody.

Those detained are the Rabi Island Council's deputy Chairman, the Rev. Kaitangare Kaburoro, assistant secretary, Teem Takoto, councillor, Tekale Tabuariki, Takaro Teuakitari, Betero Tionikai, Rokouea, Tebike Tebetang and Teiaua.

A total of 14 Banabans, including their vice chairman, the Rev. Kaitangare Kaburoro, are now being remanded in custody in Tarawa.

The group was brought in to Tarawa from Banaba on T. S. Teraka on Monday to await trials in the High Court due on March 19th.

They are to appear against similar charges of arson, criminal trespass, conspiracy to commit a felony and taking part in a riot.



Banabans burning the London Constitutional agreement beside the memorial of Capt. Ellis, who first discovered Phosphate on Banaba. (COURTESY - FIJI TIMES)

## Ministerial Tour on Constitution

(CONT'D FROM P2)

hardly saw anything. The party were now panic. Very fortunately, a catamaran was anchored off the beach. Timai and Tikataake untied the boat and sailed it to the scene.

At this point Tenanoa had reached the victim and shortly afterwards, the boat arrived and put both men aboard. "In my despair", Arobati said, "I prayed for my rescue and indeed, I am very grateful".

Everything was now okay but the question was raised, How could we cross the passage? The only way through this passage is to cross from the ocean side where it is apparently shallower when it's high tide. We all went up there. Half of the team got to the other side including the two Ministers. The rest were later picked up by a motor-boat, which happened to pass by.

Everything now sounds safe and fine and the team continued to the last village on the schedule, Butoa for the public meeting.

The party returned back from Tanaea by car late in the evening.



3151 TIMES 20/4/79.

# Banaba meeting

Gilbertese and Banaban leaders will meet in Suva later this month to talk about the Banabans' demand for independence for Ocean Island.

They would ask the Fiji Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, to chair the meeting, Rabi Council of Leaders secretary Mr Thomas Teai said yesterday.

Mr Teai has just returned from Tarawa, where he and the Rabi Council chairman the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka talked with the Chief Minister of the Gilbert Islands, Mr Jeremia Tabai.

Dates had been set for April 23 to May 4.

But the Gilbertese attitude to the Banaban agitation for independence had hardened, he said. Armed police were patrolling Ocean Island and had blocked off some of the phosphate mining areas.



FIRST TIME 9

12/31/79

# GILBERTS BILL RE-LISTED FOR DEBATE

LONDON. — The Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) Independence Bill has been re-listed for discussion by the new British Parliament, the Foreign Office said.

However it is too early to say whether the Bill will be passed in time for the planned in-

dependence celebration on July 12, a spokesman said.

Introduced to the House of Commons in the last days of the Labour Government, the

Independence Bill fell without discussion.

Party Whips meeting after the no-confidence vote agreed it was too controversial to be voted upon before the House rose for the general election.

The new Parliament has its state opening next Tuesday, and campaigners against the Bill believe it will come up again in the following week.

Buckingham Palace confirmed yesterday it was planned that Princess Anne would attend the independence celebrations on the assumption that the bill will be passed.



# Talks on Phoenix future

*High Times*  
*5/5/79*

Negotiations between the United States, Britain and the Gilbert Islands about the Phoenix Islands begin in Suva on Monday.

Under old legislation, the United States claimed all the islands in the South Pacific which had guano (phosphate deposits) including the Phoenix Islands.

A United States Embassy spokesman said yesterday the negotiations were to get the old claims sorted out before the Gilberts became independent.

Similar negotiations were held with Tuvalu before it became independent.



# Ocean Is talks to resume later

Gilbertese and Banaban representatives have agreed to continue talks on Ocean Island, after failing to resolve their dispute at meetings in Suva this week.

And a joint communique issued yesterday by the two sides said the Banabans had "reaffirmed that it was neither their desire nor their intention to delay the grant of independence to the Gilbert Islands."

Fiji's Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisesse Mara, said he hoped there was now a better understanding of the issues involved and the parties would continue dialogue with the goodwill and mutual resolve which had emerged.

The communique said the two sides recognised the issues were too complex and would need to be examined exhaustively at future meetings.

They accepted a working paper circulated by the chairman, Ratu Sir Kamisesse, as a possible basis for future talks.

The Gilbertese delegation said it had no mandate to enter further talks which could delay independence, but the Gilberts would continue talks afterwards.

The communique said the Banabans were "extremely disappointed that consultations with the Gilbert Islands Government could not be carried further at this stage," particularly because proposals concerning Banaba (Ocean Island) in the Gilberts Constitution drafted in their absence were not acceptable to them.

The two sides would now tell the British Government of their positions, it said.

Ratu Sir Kamisesse offered to help in future meetings.



# Banaba talks begun

Fiji TIMES  
16/5/79

Representatives of the Gilbert Islands Government and Banaban leaders, began talks in Suva yesterday in a continuing attempt to find a mutually acceptable solution to the constitutional future of Ocean Island.

The Gilbert Islands delegation is being led by the Chief Minister, Mr Ieremia Tabai. The chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders' the Rev Tawaka, is leading the Banaban delegation.

The Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, is chairing the meeting.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Gilbert Islands Protestant Church, the Roman Catholic Church in the Gilberts and Fiji and the Methodist Church in Fiji, after meeting in the New Hebrides to discuss the problems facing the Gilbert Islands Government and Banaba, called yesterday on the Gilbertese and Fiji governments to sign a treaty of friendship "to show there is no ill feelings between the two peoples."

The churchmen said the Gilbertese should reconsider the gaoling of Banabans involved in disturbances in Ocean Island, and that the Banaban leaders should prevent any further violence there.

They urged further efforts to foster understanding and brotherhood between the Banabans and Gilbertese.



# The Fiji Times

THE FIRST NEWSPAPER PUBLISHED  
IN THE WORLD TODAY

MARCH DAILY  
SALES: 24,984

Suva is just west of the international  
Date Line where the new day begins



FORECAST: Mainly fine.  
Details Page 22.

109th Year No. 101

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 1979

32 PAGES

12c

# OCEAN ISLAND 'ARMED

# CAMP'

The Banabans yesterday described their Ocean Island homeland as an "armed camp" patrolled by 400 police armed with rifles and teargas guns.

The Rev. Tebaiti Tawaka, leader of the 3000 Banabans, claimed heavily armed police were harassing his people.

The atmosphere was tense, he said.

Meanwhile, talks on Ocean Island's future between Gilbert Islands and Banaban leaders have been fixed for May 14 to 18 in Suva.

Most of the Banabans live on Rabi Island in Fiji, but hundreds have recently returned to their phosphate-rich homeland to fight for its independence from the Gilbert Islands.

Rev Tawaka said police had arrested 19 Banabans after a dance hall fight on Ocean Island, but Gilbertese people involved in the fracas were not detained.

Police attempted to prevent photographs being taken of a Banaban injured by a police teargas shell and issued a report that he was hurt by a fall.

"They apparently made no attempt to get the man proper treatment in Tarawa and we had to arrange for him to come back to Fiji to hospital," Mr Tawaka said.

"He was beaten as he lay on the ground.

"They left him lying there unconscious and an ambulance was finally called by onlookers."

He said about 400 Gilbertese police were now stationed on Ocean Island, most of them armed with rifles and teargas guns.

"Everywhere the Banabans go they are watched by these heavily armed police. To add insult, police are now being trained in riot procedures on a Banaban community sports field."

He complained that 13 Banabans released in Tarawa af-

Flour Mills' chairman, Bombay businessman Pratap Sinh Visanji, definitely knew of the falsification of the company's wheat stocks, the Supreme Court was told yesterday.

The allegation came from Suva accountant Mr Mumtaz Ali, the man appointed as the Government's investigator into the Flour Mills affairs.

Mr Ali said also that he could find no reason for the flour company's failure to reach a \$1,200,000 profit for 1976 except for the

## FMF chairman had figures, says witness

methods it used to lower its profit figure.

A series of checks by his investigation team showed differences of up to 1100 tons in FMF wheat stocks compared with the figures given in

its stock sheets.

But in some instances FMF had been fair in making a monthly understatement of stocks, which had been nothing more than routine "prudent" accounting.

● Full report Page 14



*Fiji Times 2/3/79*

# I'll explain sabotage, says Caine

Alliance backbencher Mr Fred Caine, who accompanied a Banaban group which went on a sabotage mission to Ocean Island this month, plans to hold a series of public meetings to explain the events on the island.

Mr Caine, talking at Lautoka Hospital, where he was admitted last week, said he would call on all other national seat Members of Parliament representing General Electors to attend the meeting.

He hoped to begin the series of meetings as soon as he is discharged from hospital and would call similar ones in Suva and other southern districts if asked to.

Mr Caine reacted angrily to letters in the Press criticising his involvement in the Banaban dispute which came to a head with bombing of phosphate mining installations on Ocean Island two weeks ago.

"The people who wrote those letters did not even bother to contact me to ask what my role was on the island before sending off their letters," he said.

He would seek legal advice on one particular letter which appeared, he said.

Mr Caine said he would produce more than 2000 hand-bills giving a full account of events on the island and what role he played in the dispute for distribution to anyone who wanted them.



tarian who brought terrorism to the Pacific.

By actively supporting the acts of terrorism, Freddie has participated in the practice of sabotage of other people's property if you can't get your own way — be that way right or wrong. Without a very positive and strongly worded condemnation of these acts of terrorism by Fiji citizens by the Alliance Government, many people in Fiji now accept this practice as right and proper (see "Off the Cuff" February 24).

Welcome to Fiji all you foreign and local investors, the oil and copper prospectors. Fiji can now offer you our own home grown, politically led terrorists and saboteurs who will be very quick to throw a bomb at your works if someone thinks they are getting a raw deal, whether it involves you or not.

This time a blown up excavator and burned hands; Next time a gutted sugar mill or an irreplaceable hydro plant.

I am sorry to see Rodney Ackraman, a man with a law degree advocating lawlessness, Pacific way or any other way. Civilisation attack with senseless destruction of property and putting life and limb in peril is a return to club law.

If Fiji really feels terrorism is to be condemned, so much so that at the drop of a hat it sends a force to Lebanon to police the results of such acts, then it must introduce legislation to make such acts by Fiji citizens — at home or abroad, a crime with punitive and deterrent sentencing.

Fiji cannot take its rightful place in the community of nations in this world if it encourages and harbours terrorists with impunity.

If our new found politicians, who are drawing Fiji taxpayers' money to look after their constituents in Fiji, want to help deprived people then go along and have a chat with Dr and Shirley Hemming or those wonderful brothers with Father Hurley. They really do need help that Fiji politicians have just got to do something about.

Arthur Jennings and his mates could do with a hand with the blind children too, or Freddie could make his allowance go further by lending a hand with the crippled children at Lautoka. You won't get a picture in the paper though.

COLIN WEAVER, M.P.  
Vuda Point,  
Lautoka.

## Terrorism in Pacific

Sir, — In my opinion Freddie Caine will go down in history as the Fiji Parliamen-



2151 TIMES 28/2/79

# Banabans

## in court

Eight Banabans charged in connection with a petrol bombing incident on Ocean Island earlier this month were due to appear in court on Monday, a Banaban spokesman said in Suva yesterday.

They were charged with intimidation and unlawful assembly on February 21, he said.

Meanwhile, another group of 150 Banabans are due to leave for Ocean Island in the Nauru vessel Cenpac Rounder on Saturday.

Banaban leader Reverend Tebati Tawaka has returned from Britain where he was campaigning for the Banaban cause, to organise the departure of the new group.

He said in Suva yesterday that they would strengthen the Banaban presence on Ocean Island, their homeland.



Fiji Times 5/3/77  
An excellent letter.

over the Pacific fermenting trouble and dissension, then I can only conclude that they are working against the interest of their own country.

Politicians should refrain from meddling in dangerous international politics.

I wish now to take Mr Acraman to task by quoting him. "A crisis situation calls for strong measures and the Banabans people are now taking them."

Am I given to understand that he supports the law of the jungle? That petrol bombs, sabotage of machinery, disruption of law and order are the only way of the Banabans to achieve the goal?

If this is what he truly believes in then I am disappointed in him. One would think that a man of his calibre should have a little more common sense.

Finally, his un-necessary ludicrous cry of the part-European to back a man who ~~calls~~ himself to the furtherance of destruction is ridiculous.

I much prefer to place my allegiance to the present leadership.

FRED ELBOURNE,  
Rewa Street,  
Suva.

*Apout-ampere*

## Ocean Island adventure

Sir, — I refer to Mr R.W.D. Acraman's outburst concerning Hon. Fred Caine's adventure on Ocean Island.

His cry to the part-Europeans to rally around Mr Caine compels me to answer his letter.

It is difficult to understand Mr Caine's reasons for going to Ocean Island.

I am wondering whether he went as a special emissary of the General Electors? Or a Trade Unionist? Or representative of a vested interest? Or merely as a political entrepreneur seeking the limelight and sensationalism at the expense of jeopardizing the international relationship of this country with another?

Small as we are, the Government of Fiji has laws endeavoured to extend the hand of friendship to all nations. It has succeeded very well. But if we are going to allow every politician to go gallivanting all



7/3/79

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### The British and the Banabans

THE hostile reception that Mr Evan Luard, British Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, received on Rabi Island yesterday must have given him some idea of the feelings of the Banaban people on his government's decision to hand over Ocean Island to the Gilberts as part of their territory when it attains independence in July.

It is now up to Mr Luard to convey this message to the British Government.

Indeed, if the British Government does not want to leave behind a legacy of hate and continual strife in the South Pacific, it would have to seriously consider revising the plans under which it wants the Gilberts to become independent and Ocean Island to be part of it.

No settlement can be imposed on a people. The British, with all their centuries of colonial administration, surely know this.

The Banabans have flatly rejected the idea of becoming part of the Gilberts. After all, they have had little to do with the Gilberts since they were uprooted from Ocean Island and transplanted on tiny Rabi Island more than 40 years ago.

They have tended to identify themselves more with Fiji, of which most are now citizens. Therefore, their emotional attachment to the island of their birth and to repossess it as an independent state is understandable.

Equally understandable is their wish to have Ocean Island become an associate state of Fiji.

Fiji has no territorial ambitions, but is sympathetic to the Banabans' desire to win back their island home and continue their association with the country of their adoption.

What Mr Luard and the British Government must try to understand is the potentially explosive danger of pushing a small island state into independence when there are already signs of violent resistance and irreconcilable divisions between the peoples they are trying to integrate into a nation.

Such a situation will only provide a fertile ground for political adventurism and exploitation by destructive forces from outside the South Pacific region.



Fiji Times 6/3/79

## British official to fly to Rabi

British Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Evan Luard, will fly to Rabi tomorrow to talk to Banaban leaders.

Mr Luard was due to arrive in Fiji late yesterday.

British Member of Parliament, Sir Bernard Braine, who supports the Banabans' independence movement, has called the planned discussion "a charade".

In a statement sent from London by Banaban advisors, Sir Bernard said that the Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, had written to the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, on February 16 expressing a hope that further dialogue with and between the Gilbertese and Banabans "in order to reach a Pacific solution acceptable to all" could be considered.

Sir Bernard said Lord Goronwy-Robert's response was narrowly diplomatic and that Evan Luard would discuss safeguards for the Banabans within united Kiribati (independent Gilberts).

This ruled out discussion on independence for the Banaban's home land Ocean Island.



# BANABAN CLAIM IS RULED OUT

British under secretary of state Mr Evan Luard yesterday ruled out any possibility of Ocean Island independence saying the decision on the matter had "already been reached."

He said he very much regretted that the Banaban leaders were not prepared to discuss Britain's latest three-point proposal with him.

Before going to Rabi Island yesterday afternoon Mr Luard said he was in Fiji to discuss self-govern-

ment for the Banabans but not independence.

"It doesn't seem very sensible to think in terms of independence for a very small community," Mr Luard said.

Most of the Banabans were living very happily on Rabi and in other parts of Fiji and there were at the most about 100 Banabans on Ocean Island, he said.

The British Government did not consider that the Banaban claims for the separation of Ocean Island

had no basis but it considered the island no different from any other in the Gilberts group.

"They have the same language, the same culture, and traditions," he said.

Mr Luard met Fiji's Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, last night after returning from Rabi.

"We agreed that the whole situation might look a little different in three to six months time," Mr Luard said.

He said the question of independence for Banaba, which was really a matter for the Gilbert Islands Government to decide on, had already been decided on at the Constitutional conference held in London last year.

Mr Luard said his visit to the Pacific was to discuss how to strengthen existing safeguards for the Banabans if they remained within a united Gilbert Islands, and the

financial provisions that have been made for them.

Asked what British reaction to the petrol-bombing by Banabans on Ocean Island last month were, Mr Luard said the feeling was mostly that it was "misconceived action" and "quite contrary to the traditions of this part of the world."

Mr Luard will leave today for the Gilbert Islands to hold talks with the Government.



Fiji Times 10/5/79

# COURTS REJECTS GILBERTS WRIT

A Supreme Court writ application by the Gilbert Islands Government seeking to restrain Banabans in Fiji from interfering with phosphate mining on Ocean Island has been dismissed by Mr Justice Kermode.

He said in chambers on Tuesday that the application was most unusual.

He said it would be extremely wide, seeking to restrain the whole Banaban community, the original inhabitants of Ocean Island.

The Gilbert Islands Government's concern was fully appreciated, Mr Justice Kermode said.

It was public knowledge that a large party of Banabans from Rabi Island in Fiji recently landed on Ocean Island.

But there was nothing before him to indicate that the plaintiff had not got the situation under control, he said.

Meanwhile, new talks between the Banabans and Gilbert Islands Governments on the future of Ocean Island are being arranged for next week.

Gilberts Chief Minister, Mr Eremia Tebai, said yesterday he hoped the talks would begin within a few days.

He has been in Fiji to negotiate a friendship treaty with the United States, which will give the Gilberts sovereignty over 14 islands in the Phoenix and Line groups when it becomes independent.

The US previously claimed the islands and had installations on some of them for refuelling ships and tracking satellites.



Fiji Times 20/11/78

# Banabans attend UK talks

Banaban leaders flew to London at the weekend in their latest move to gain independence for their Ocean Island home.

They will attend a conference to negotiate the future of the Gilbert Islands, of which Ocean Island is now part.

British and Gilbertese Government representatives will attend the conference.

The Banabans, who now live on Rabi Island in Fiji, have been invited only as observers.

A Banaban spokesman, Reverend Tabaiti Tawaka, said in Suva the Banaban people were angry about Britain's attitude to their representation at the conference.

"Observer status is unacceptable."

"Debate on the future of Ocean Island will be a major part of the conference and we strongly claim we should have full delegate status," he said.

He objected to British and Gilbertese representatives discussing the status of Ocean Island and said it was a matter for negotiation between the Banabana and Britain.

Rev. Tawaka said the Banabans were invited to attend the talks only 18 days ago, which gave them little time to prepare.

"It is a further indication of Britain's attitude to our claims for political justice," he said.

Mr Tawaka said the Banabans wished the Gilbertese well in their moves for self-determination.

"But they have no right to decide the future of the Banabans and Ocean Island. They are not acting in the spirit of the South Pacific islands.

"Ocean Island is stolen property and should be returned to the rightful owners."

The Banabans were exiled from phosphate-rich Ocean Island after the last war.

They claim the island should never have been made part of the Gilberts.

Rev Tawaka is chairman of the Rabi Council. He will lead a team of eight councillors and an adviser, Mr Karam Ramrakha, a Fiji lawyer.

The Banaban delegation will meet with supporters in London before the conference.



SIT TIMES 5/5/79

# Banabans want inquiry

A Banaban delegation yesterday delivered a protest letter to the British High Commission in Suva demanding a full and independent inquiry into incidents on Ocean Island.

The letter repeated the protest that Banaba is now an "armed camp."

It referred to 20-year-old Banaban Tabare Biara, now lying in the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva with

severe head injuries and maintained this was caused by a police teargas shell.

It attacked British Phosphate Commission manager on Ocean Island Mr Ronald Elliott, who said the wound was caused by a rock.

The medical superintendent at the CWM, Dr Champak Rathod, said Biara was now conscious and able to speak a little. It was too early to say whether he had suffered a permanent brain damage.



## GILBERT ISLANDS

# Britain casts off its last Pacific outpost

LONDON, Friday (AAP-Reuter). — Britain cut loose the most far-flung outpost of its near-vanished empire yesterday with the signing of an independence agreement for the South Pacific Gilbert Islands.

The 33 sparsely-populated islands, straddling the Equator and bisected by the international dateline, cover 14 million square kilometres of ocean.

The agreement, reached between British officials and island leaders during two weeks of talks in London will give the Gilberts independence next July.

The accord rejects a plea by the Banaban people, whose ancestral homeland of Banaba [Ocean Island] has been ravaged by phosphate mining, to separate from the group and become a full colony.

The new Constitution will guarantee the Banabans, who mostly live on the Fijian island of Rambi, a veto on changes affecting their barely-habitable homeland.

Named after the British mariner Thomas Gilbert, who visited the area in 1788, the new republic of Kiribati (pronounced Kiribass) is made up of the Gilbert, Phoenix and Line Islands, which include Christmas Island.

The new republic's only major resource, phosphate from Banaba Island, will run out next year, leaving the island with copra to export and fisheries to develop.

A Foreign Office spokesman said Britain would give development aid equivalent to about SA26,580,000 from 1979 to 1982. Exceptionally, it would also give SA9.1 million to meet Budget deficits during the same period.

He said Britain had taken into account that independence would coincide with the sudden end of phosphate revenues.

The Banaban islanders' fight for independence from their neighbours may not be over yet. Their campaigner, British Opposition Labour Party MP, Sir Bernard Braine, has voted to mobilise opposition to the Gilberts' Independence Bill when it comes to the House of Commons for ratification.



# Bomb attacks on Ocean Island

OCEAN ISLAND, Monday (AAP). — Eight Banabans had been arrested since petrol-bomb attacks on phosphate mining equipment on Ocean Island in the Pacific last Thursday night, police said yesterday.

Police said the attacks on the British Phosphate Commission

mining site followed the company's rejection of the minority Banaban community's demand that all mining on the island — part of the Gilbert Islands British Protectorate — should cease immediately.

Police said tension between the Banabans, who claim Ocean Island as their ancestral home, and the majority Gilbertese community was running high since the bombing.

About 200 Banabans and 1,300 Gilbertese live on the island.

The Gilbertese came to the island to work the phosphate mines and the original Banabans inhabitants were moved to Rambi Island in Fiji after mining had made most of Ocean Island uninhabitable.

Police said a Banaban community leader, the Reverend

Kaitangare Kaburoro, was among those detained.

Mr Kaburoro is deputy chairman of the Rambi Council of Leaders.

Police said they used teargas while making arrests.

The British Phosphate Commission's manager, Mr Ronald Elliott, a Briton, was injured while fighting a fire during the incidents.

Police said they had feared

that members of the Banaban community would attack Gilbertese homes after the bombings.

The expatriate Banabans have been agitating for the past 10 years to force the British Government to allow them to resettle on Ocean Island and have objected to British plans to incorporate Ocean Island into an independent Kiribati with the Gilbert Islands on July 12.



# VIOLENCE ON OCEAN ISLAND

A Rabi Islander who was flown to Suva from Nauru for emergency hospital treatment on Friday night was improving satisfactorily at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital yesterday, Medical Superintendent Doctor Champak Rathod said.

The man, Tabare Biara, 20, suffered a serious head injury after he was hit on the head with a teargas shell on Ocean Island (Banaba).

Tabare's father, Biara Kabiriera, who accompanied him from Ocean Island to Suva, told the Fiji Times that Tabare was still lying unconscious in hospital.

Mr Biara said that Tabare went to an island night party on Saturday, April 7.

A fight started between the Banaban and Gilbertese boys in the party and the police were called in.

Mr Biara said that his son left the dancehall about 10pm to return home and he was followed by five Gilbertese policemen.

He said people living nearby saw one of the men hit Tibare with a teargas shell from behind.

He said while he was lying unconscious on the ground the other men hit him with their batons and left him lying there.

Mr Biara said the people who saw the incident rang the hospital and an ambulance was sent to pick up Tabare.

He said his son was taken to Nauru on a British Phosphate Commission boat and flown to Nausori airport on a stretcher aboard a scheduled Air Nauru flight.

He said Tabare was his youngest son in his family of three children.

His eldest son, Purenimone Biara, is one of the many Banban people taken to prison in Tarawa, he said.

\* \* \*

PERTH. — The Australian Prime Minister, Mr Malcolm Fraser, told the Liberal Council yesterday that he was prepared to review the question of compensation for the Banabans.

He said he believed that a \$10 million offer by the British, Australian and New Zealand governments was both fair and realistic, but added: "However, I am prepared to review the current position and see where it stands at the moment."

The offer by the three governments was to settle a moral obligation because of devastation to Ocean Island by phosphate mining in the past 80 years.

Police attacked my  
son, says Banaban



# Tories 'may split' on Banabans

Fiji Times  
15/5/79

The Ocean Island dispute threatened to cause a major row within Britain's new Conservative Party Government, the secretary of the Justice for Banabans Campaign, George Knapp, said in Suva yesterday.

Mr Knapp said a powerful Parliamentary lobby was determined to prevent Ocean Island being forced into an independent Gilberts state against the will of the Banabans.

The pro-Banaban group included representatives of all parties and was led by Conservative backbencher Sir Bernard Braine, he said.

The Gilberts are due to become independent on July 12.

"The big question is whether the Tories will respond to all-party pressure in Parliament and pull Ocean Island out of the Gilberts before that day," Mr Knapp said.

The alternative was to face up to a major row at the outset

of their administration between the leadership and a resolute band of Conservative backbenchers.

Mr Knapp said the Banabans had sympathisers in the new Conservative cabinet, including the Attorney-General, Sir Michael Havers, and Sir Keith Joseph.

Minister of State Leon Brittan was also a leading supporter.

The Banabans had as many as 100 supporters among the Conservatives.

Many would, with reluctance, toe the party line, but quite a number would, without doubt, rebel, Mr Knapp said.

Although the South Pacific problem of the Banabans could be thought a distant and minor one, both the new Prime

Minister, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, and her chief whip, had expressed considerable concern of even a tiny split in Tory ranks.

Mr Knapp said Mrs Thatcher could probably see a stormy time ahead for her Government, when the party would need to present a united front.

Full party unity and high Tory morale, which was essential at this time, could be impaired by a bitter row within ranks on even such a small issue as the self-determination of Banabans on Ocean Island, he said.

Mr Knapp is in Suva to join a Banaban delegation for talks beginning today with Gilbertese ministers under the chairmanship of the Fiji Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara.

## Kapaiwai runs aground

The Government vessel Kapaiwai went aground on a reef near Moturiki Island in the Lomaiviti group on Friday afternoon.

And Mr Charles Stinson's boat Molly Dean helped tow her to Suva on Sunday.

The vessel is now on the Government Slip in Walu Bay, and will be undergoing minor repairs this week.

The Marine Department was unable to give more details yesterday.



\$3 million in cash and \$800,000 in jewelry with the help of several accomplices. general elections promised by the military government.

*Boston globe*

On Saturday, another White Zambian, Carl Bothma, was shot and killed about seven miles west of Lusaka.

*20 Feb 1979*

# Ocean Island vows to fight for freedom

Associated Press

LONDON—Inhabitants of Ocean Island, a 2-square-mile speck in the South Pacific, say they have launched a guerrilla war for independence from Britain, ruler of their phosphate-rich homeland.

The islanders, known as Banabans, fought their first battle last Thursday, attacking a British-run phosphate mine with firebombs, one day after authorities refused their demands to halt mining operations.

The British mine manager was injured in the attack and eight Banabans were arrested, including two leaders of the island's independence movement.

Islanders here to lobby British lawmakers for independence, warned that sabotage would continue until the British grant their wish.

"The whole Banaban race is fully behind the Council of Leaders and jailing will not discourage us," council chairman Rev. Tobias Tawaka told reporters Sunday night. "We will press on for our independence regardless of the consequences."

Ocean Island was annexed by Britain in the early 1900s, and made a part of its Gilbert Islands colony. The Gilberts are scheduled to become independent in July, but the Banabans want separate home-rule for their island.

They claim the island, once known as Banaba, can support itself on its phosphate exports of \$5 million a year. Copra, the dried meat of the coconut, is the only export of the other 32 islands in the Gilberts and earns less than \$1 million a year.

Britain moved most of the 3100 Banabans from their homes to Fiji in 1945 because of the mining operations. The islanders have waged a long fight in the British courts for the right to return. Tawaka said that after 10 years of patiently asking Britain for the return of their island, the islanders saw no alternative but to take action.

9

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cc  
1.00

9

9



A very poor selection of cuttings re the Banabans.

I am off to London via Sydney tomorrow for Neil's funeral  
and shall be away for 7 - 10 days.

Yours  
G. Mac.



FUJI TIMES  
28/3/79

# Tarawa trial queried

Banabans' lawyer K.C. Ramrakha is in Tarawa questioning the right of the Gilbertese High Court to try 43 Banabans on charges of intimidation, arson, conspiracy and trespass.

A High Court spokesman said the Banabans appeared in court on Monday and again today.

Mr Ramrakha was questioning the right of the court to try them and the case was expected to continue for some time.

Six members of the Rab Council of Leaders and the secretary are charged with intimidating the British Phosphate Commissioners and with plotting and ordering the fire bombing of BPC installations and equipment on Ocean Island on February 15.

The other 37 face charges of arson, attempted arson, criminal trespass, conspiracy and riotous behaviour.

Fiji Times - 24/3/79

# Writ is filed against Banabans

The Gilbert Islands Government has filed a writ in the Fiji Supreme Court seeking an injunction to restrain the Rabi Council of Leaders and any other members of the Banaban community from further interfering with mining operations on Ocean Island.

The writ, which was filed in the Supreme Court last week by Sir John Falvey and Mitchell Keil and Associates on behalf of the Gilbertese Government, also claims damages, costs and other relief that the court deems fit.

In its statement of claim the writ says that on February 15 certain members of the Rabi Council of Leaders, and other members of the Banaban community, its servants and its agents, interfered with mining operations of the British Phosphate Commission on Ocean Island through unlawful acts and caused damage to the Gilbertese Government.

It says the Council of Leaders "intends to take action to further interfere with the mining operations on Ocean Island, causing loss to the Gilbertese Government."

The Gilbertese Government, the writ says, is the government of the Gilbert Islands which includes Banaban or Ocean Island.



# HURT BANABAN FLOWN TO SUVA

A Banaban man who suffered a serious head injury on Ocean Island earlier this week was flown to Suva last night for emergency hospital treatment.

An unconfirmed report said the man, a Rabi Islander, had been hit in the head with a tear gas shell.

He was taken to Nauru by boat and flown to Nausori airport on a stretcher aboard a scheduled Air Nauru flight.

An ambulance rushed him from the airport to the Colonial War Memorial hospital.

FITI TIMES 21/4/79.

Fiji Times 26/3/79

Obviously NOT written by a  
junior Secondary School boy!

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

meaningless tragedies every year.

Today is someone else's child, tomorrow it may be yours.

DR B.R. LOMALOMA,  
Lautoka Hospital.

## Be fair to Banabans

Sir. — One is greatly puzzled as to why Joana S. Kotobalavu of ACS (Fiji Times March 15) has bitterly criticised the frequency with which the Banabans' problems appear in our local newspaper.

It was obvious from her letter that her scathing attack was based on nothing less than her inconsiderate attitude.

Miss Kotobalavu's school appreciates the fact that the Banaban people are our neighbours. We should not be indifferent to their present move but rather co-operate with them in every way possible, so that their objective can be achieved.

No doubt, however, she is well aware of the invaluable contributions these generous people have made towards the development of our country.

These contributions were highlighted in numerous fund-raising projects in our country which the Banabans were invited to open. They donated thousands of dollars to these functions without counting the cost.

It is regrettable that Miss Kotobalavu ignores these generous acts and chooses to make an outcry of the few spaces in the local newspapers which the journalists and Banabans use to further their cause and the sympathetic world to take note of it.

Probably she is ignorant of the fact Press freedom is a democratic privilege which extends its advantage to everyone irrespective of colour, creed, race or origin.

If she feels that there are many more important local matters which should appear in the newspapers rather than the Banabans' problems, she should by all means submit them to the Press for publication. We

should like to read them.

Last but not least, one is not forced to read a news item which does not suit one's taste. He or she is at liberty to choose from the variety of topics contained in the newspaper. One should not forget that every news item published has a theme it wants to portray.

My little piece of advice to sister Kotobalavu is "Be self-forgetful and think of others."

PENI TOKAI LAVETA,  
Nakauvadra Junior Secondary  
School  
Rakiraki, Ra.



SUN TIMES 28/3/79

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Logic on Banabans

Sir. — I would like to congratulate Atarake T Rotan, who wrote the article on Banaban rights which appeared in Friday's issue, March 9, 1979.

Atarake T. Rotan explained his ideas with well planned, organised and logical facts which were clearly supported by ingeniously researched evidence and reports made by H E Maude and many others.

Referring to Ms Layon's and Ms Copeland's article on Banaban Claims, which appeared on March 6, it sounded as if they were chanting some old worn-out legends handed down from ....I don't know.

This form of writing is not good enough. These days people need facts to be convinced and without facts hardly anything holds. It is like water being poured into a bottomless jar.

Once again congratulation Atarake T Rotan for expressing yourself so clearly and you have certainly achieved what you intended to underline to us.

DOREEN ANNE,  
Cakobau Road, Nausori.

FIRST TIMES 17/5/79.

# Banabans irate at UK official

The Banaban delegation to the Ocean Island constitutional talks yesterday protested about the presence in Suva of a senior British Foreign Service official.

The Banaban leader, the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, said the official, Mr R.J. Stratton, appeared to be advising the Gilbertese representatives.

Yesterday afternoon two Banaban supporters, parliamentarians Mr Fred Caine and Mr Karam Ramrakha, met Mr Stratton at the British High Commission.

The MPs said later that they asked Mr Stratton precisely what his role was.

"We told him there were suspicions that he was in Suva to ensure that the Gilbertese did not make any major concessions," Mr Ramrakha said.

"Mr Stratton, however, assured us that his only function was to stand by and relay messages to London from the conference if this was required.

"He confirmed that he would be travelling to London after the conference with the Chief Minister, Mr Ieremai Tabai."

Mr Tawaka said that the Banabans had always held the view about the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office had played a major role in influencing the Gilbertese and that the hard line adopted by them was a result of this influence.

"We understand that Mr Stratton is an extremely powerful and influential civil servant whose opinions on the Banaban question would carry great weight with ministers," he said.

"It seems strange therefore that he should be in Suva in the role of a standby messenger.

"Several people have seen Mr Stratton in discussions with the Gilbertese delegates outside the conference room."



FISI TIMES 28/3/79

## Meanwhile, in the sandhills....

Fred Caine today enters his third day of fasting and prayers in the Sigatoka sandhills in support of the Banabans who are seeking separation from the Gilberts.

He intends to stay in the sandhills until Friday, living only on a pint of water.

His prayers will include remembrance of Banaban leaders who were "political prisoners" as a result of bombing of phosphate mining installations on Ocean Island last month.

A WATER bottle and a Bible, Fred Caine begins his fast.



# Caine and the GEA

F101  
TIMES  
29/3/79

Sir. — I refer to Mr Andrew's letter to you (March 22). He thinks Mr Fred Caine is indispensable.

He thinks that if Mr Caine was present during the education debate, the whole situation would have been changed.

My letter stated merely that Mr Caine's trip to Ocean Island was in no way connected with the GEA. It seems to me that Mr Andrew has an obtuse interpretation of my letter.

CARL GIBLIN  
Lautoka.



FITI TIMES 28/3/79

# GEA and Caine

Sir, — I wish to comment on Carl Giblin's letter Caine and Banabans (March 13).

I feel he was speaking for himself and not the GEA Lautoka branch as he would be entitled to.

I would also like to comment on John Andrew's reply.

• Where was Mr Caine on March 22, 1979?

I do agree our Member of Parliament should have been in the vital education debate in Parliament.

I do not agree that the GEA has become defunct but perhaps if John Andrew cares to look in the mirror he might see a person who could help make sure the GEA does not become defunct by supporting the association and attending meeting.

MALCOLM DUNCAN  
BEDDOES

President

GEA Lautoka Branch.

★ ★ ★

PARLIAMENTARIAN Mr Fred Caine plans to go to the Sigatoka sand hills today to pray and fast "for the deliverance of the Banaban people and their ancestral homeland, Banaba."

Mr Caine will wear a black robe and carry a Holy Bible and a one-pint bottle of water which he brought from Peking during his trip there last year.

Yesterday Mr Caine stayed at his home in Drasa Avenue, Lautoka preparing for his five days of praying and fasting.

He is preparing several prayers. One of them called "A prayer for a country in exile."

Mr Caine said he would go without food as soon as he set foot in the Sigatoka sandhills. He would be there until Friday.

"I am not worried," he said. "I have been adrift in the sea for four days without food and water before and I know what sort of experience it is."

He added: "The world must know about the British Government's injustice."

★ ★ ★

717  
TIMES.  
26/3/79.



Cannot think why they give  
publicity to this self-seeking  
publicity part-European.

Fiji Times

2/4/79

By BEACHCOMBERS



## FLOTSAM & JETSAM

A LIGHTER side on the effects of Cyclone Meli comes to us from Alliance MP Mr Fred Caine, who ended a week of fasting and prayers in support of the Banabans in the Sigatoka Sandhills on Friday.

Mr Caine said when the storm was at its height he was praying for the collapse of the British Government in a crucial Parliamentary vote.

"But before the government could collapse, my tent collapsed on top of me from the winds."

★ ★ ★

## The price of a moonscape

**TREASURE ISLANDS:** The Trials of the Banabans, by Pearl Binder. Angus & Robertson, \$13.95.

WITHOUT the millions of tons of phosphate yielded by islands in the Pacific, Australian wheat farming, New Zealand dairying and other agricultural enterprises around the world could not have flourished as they have.

But phosphate mining produces a moonscape. The stuff is dug out from between pinnacles of limestone leaving behind a useless, pitted, stalagmite surface.

As an economic and social force, phosphate mining destroyed the traditional lifestyles of Nauru and Banaba, but in the case of Banaba it has physically destroyed the island as well. Pearl Binder's book tells the story of how this destruction came about and traces the heroic efforts of the Banabans to win fair compensation for the loss of their home.

In 1899 Albert Ellis, a New Zealander employed by the Pacific Islands Company of which his father was a director, had assayed a lump of rock which had been picked up on Nauru years before since when it had served as a doorstep.

The PI Company, chaired by Lord Stanmore, a former High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, had been formed to mine phosphate but had not prospered because of the low quality of the deposits available to it. Ellis's doorstep turned out to be pure phosphate and the countdown for Nauruan and Banaban traditional life began.

Nauru was a German possession so Stanmore's company had to use commercial guile to secure mining rights there. Banaba, however, was part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorate, a fragment of the British Empire. Nevertheless, Ellis hurried over, raised the British flag and concluded an "agreement" with some Banabans that turned the whole of the island over to the Company for fifty pounds per annum which was spent in the company store.

Over more than 70 years British firms (the PI Company was succeeded by the British

Phosphate Company and later the British Phosphate Commission) have extracted millions of pounds worth of phosphate from Banaba and paid a minute amount in royalties to the Banabans.

Lord Leverhulme, a major shareholder in the BP Company, brought pressure to bear on the Colonial Office to remove impediments to the operation; officials who attempted to safeguard the islanders' rights have been removed and replaced with more complaisant men and Colonial Office employees have gone over to the companies taking valuable official information with them.

One of main thrusts of Binder's book is the revelation that Arthur Grimble, a former Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands whose book *A Pattern of Islands* was studied by a generation of Australian schoolchildren, placed his own career a long way ahead of the interests of the Banabans.

Following dislocation and severe population losses in World War II, the Banabans were removed to Rabi Island in the Fiji group which had been bought for them from Levers Pacific Plantations Ltd out of their phosphate royalties. Even if Rabi had been a suitable homeland, which it was not, the transplanting of the Banabans would not have been an easy matter.

The Banabans' claim against the Phosphate Commission for compensation has occasioned one of the longest court cases in history and enormous expense for the Banabans. At present they are offered a fund of \$10 million contributed, without conceding any liability, by the governments of Britain, Australia and New Zealand. Set against the phosphate profits it is a pitiful sum.

The only people to emerge with credit from this tale of deceit and exploitation are the Banabans and their dogged leaders.

Unfortunately Pearl Binder is not up to telling their story. The historical sections appear to be well-researched but are peppered with mis-spellings and slips. More damaging, sentimentality and imprecision pervade the book; the Banabans, properly Micronesians, are called Polyynesians throughout, and the author seems unable to decide

whether Methodism has been a good or a bad thing for them.

—PETER CORRIS

## BOOKS IN BRITAIN

### An angry cry from behind bars

**ANGEL FACE:** The Making of a Criminal, by Walter Probyn. George Allen & Unwin, \$16.25.

TO KNOW prison you have to experience the finality of a cell door slamming shut behind your back.

You have to realise the futility of hope, experience the humiliation of having to spread the cheeks of your buttocks for prison guards during a strip search, and then mentally switch-off to the kicks and baton blows as you try to breathe through the blood that flows from your nose and mouth. If you have experienced these things, then you know the world of Walter Probyn.

The British media called him "Angel Face". The British juvenile-justice system called him uncontrollable. The British courts labelled him a criminal; and threw him into the garbage cans that society call prison. The British penal system tried to break him.

Written while he was serving time in a British prison, the book traces Probyn's criminal career through the British justice-penal-parole systems and is a no-holds-barred excursion.

During 1941, in war-time London, a nine-year-old Walter Probyn was convicted of his first criminal offence — stealing a rusted can of peas from a bombed-out ruin. Though released on probation, young Probyn became rapidly embroiled in the juvenile-justice system and reappeared before the courts with increasing regularity. Sentenced to periods of incarceration within remand homes and approved schools, he absconded. On recapture, he was caned and flogged. Probyn's youth became one vicious cycle of courts, approved schools, abscondings and floggings.

In 1945, Probyn's father lay dying in hospital and requested his son's presence at the death-



John Army

GPO Box 1 4 0 4,  
Suva,  
Fiji.

Herewith the next selection of cuttings from the Fiji Times about Banaban affairs. I fear that I have no time to write, commenting upon them. I might remark, however, that an additional Banaban crowd of 150 landed on Ocean Island yesterday ex m.v. "Cenpac Rounder". I am surprised that the Gilbert Islands Government allowed it without the most stringent conditions. Another 150 are due to go on the next voyage of the same vessel! Soon the whole population of Rabi will be on Ocean Island! Instead of violence, I should have thought that the sensible thing for the Banabans to do would be to take a leaf out of Mahatma Gandhi's book and stage a complete campaign of non-violence; after all they could not imprison 2000 Banabans. Nor indeed can they if the latter use violence either, though the Banabans might lose much sympathy which they would not do by a non-violent campaign.

In very great haste; love to Honor; what about the photographs - Lester G. is pressing me!

Wm. Pac



Fiji Times 9/3/79



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Banaban rights

Sir, — I wish to comment on the letter 'Banaban Claim' by Miss Lanyon and Miss Copeland (March 6).

Banaba, for their information, is situated near the US Administered Marshall Islands about 40 miles south of the equator, 165 miles south of Nauru and 250 miles west of the Gilbert Group in the mid-Pacific.

On January 27, 1916, in the middle of the 1914-1918 war, the boundaries of the Gilberts and then the Ellice Island Colony were extended by the British Colonial Administration to include Banaba. We Banabans were not consulted about this.

The change was made as a matter of administrative convenience and imperial policy and conferred no benefit on us whatsoever. We, the Banabans, are the indigenous inhabitants of Banaba now known as Ocean Island, and not the so called 'thugs' Miss Lanyon and Miss Copeland mentioned.

Below is a report by H.E. Maude, Lecturer in Pacific Studies at the University of Canberra, compiled by Sir Bernard Braine, MP, and Mr John Lee, MP, for submission to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (April 21 1975) concerning the linguistic evidence between the Banabans and the Gilbertese.

It reads:-

"It is sometimes asserted that the Banabans must be Gilbertese because they speak Gilbertese. Apart from the fact that linguistic affinity is a shaky foundation on which to base racial relationship, that this was not always the case is not only affirmed by the Banabans themselves but was obvious to me when I was living among them in 1931-1932. During the course of the Lands Commission proceedings, which were conducted throughout in the vernacular, I soon became aware that part of the vocabulary, and a number of idioms, being used by the witnesses and assessors were not in fact, Gilbertese at all.

"As a matter of interest, therefore, the Land Commission clerk was instructed to enter in a notebook words and expressions recognised to be distinctively Banaban."

The following is from Eria Ribica, of Tabwewa, Rabi, by occupation Curator of the Genealogical Records at the office of the Rabi Council of Leaders. Under oath he said as follows (March 30, 1975):-

"Both my father and mother were Gilbertese, having been

born on the neighbouring island of Nikuanau, and I am therefore of pure Gilbertese stock... my first impression of the Banabans was their different physical appearance. Following on that was the linguistic differences. Both my wife and I were quite unable to understand the language of the Banaban people and it took time for us to familiarise ourselves sufficiently to communicate in Banaban..."

To keep Miss Lanyon and Miss Copeland on the right track, here are only a few examples of our Banaban language:

(1) to eat in Banaban is 'Nari Manana', in Gilbertese it is 'Amarake'.

(2) to swallow in Banaban is 'Nanmange', in Gilbertese it is 'Teonga'.

Since 1966 the BPC has sold phosphate at the market price. From 1966 until 1978, the British Colonial Administration in the Gilberts has taken 85 per cent of the net proceeds of sale of the phosphate in taxation. The rest was given to us. In 1973 we agreed to lease further land for mining and the United Kingdom Government agreed that we should receive 50 per cent of the net proceeds from the land which is much larger in area.

Now I wonder where did the odd 1/10 compensation given to the Gilberts come from? And as for the incident on Ocean Island, is it not right to claim the remaining 35 per cent of our promised income?

We Banabans, have already put into mind what's worth leaping for — with open eyes.

ATARAKE T. ROTAN,  
Tamavua,  
Suva.

### Levuka centennial

Sir, — The Levuka Public School, with which Fiji's national education system began, will be 100 years old on September 2 this year.

To illustrate a centennial history, and for display during the celebrations at Levuka, the

organising committee is collecting photographs of Levuka, and of the school and its teachers and pupils.

If any of your readers can help us by lending photographs, or printed or written material connected with the school, we would greatly appreciate their help.

We are particularly anxious to get a photograph of Mrs. Kate Hathaway, who was for more than twenty years the infant teacher assisting Captain D. Garner-Jones.

If photographs or other material are posted to L.G. Usher at P.O. Box 1298, Suva, or to the secretary of the centenary celebrations committee at P.O. Box 163, Suva, they will be carefully looked after and returned.

If the owners do not want them back, they will be passed on to the historical photographs section of the Fiji Museum.

L.G. USHER  
Chairman, Levuka Public School Centenary Central Organising Committee  
Suva.

### Mr Luard's visit

Sir, — I have been reading the plight of the Banabans in your paper with interest.

Their hopes were shattered when they were told that there was no possibility of Ocean Island becoming independent.

Mr Evan Luard told them that the decision had already been made and that it didn't seem very sensible to think in terms of independence for a very small community.

The British Government considered that the Banaban claims for the Ocean Island had no basis as the island was no different from any other in the Gilberts group, for they have the same language, the same culture, and traditions.

It is a pity that after a century of British management and mismanagements around this part of the world, they still fail to understand the feelings of people. It is also a pity that

they have closed the door for discussion on the only subject which is the crux of the whole controversy — total separation of Ocean Island from the Gilberts.

To add oil to the fire, Mr Luard stated that the decision on the matter had 'already been reached'. Does it really make sense for the Honourable secretary to come all this far just to antagonize the Banabans?

The claim that 'they have the same language, the same culture, and traditions' is a political side-step. The Samoans have the same thing, yet one is independent and one is under the American flag. It just doesn't hold water any more.

The claim that 'it does not seem very sensible to think in terms of independence for a very small community' is not only irresponsible but downright cheeky! The Banabans fully understand that, but they also understand that they are richer than some of their Pacific neighbouring nations.

I have a feeling that the British would rather deal with the Gilbertese government about the phosphate in Ocean Island, rather than face the new demanding Banabans.  
WATISONI BOLE,  
Nasinu.



Fiji Times 12/3/79



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

and what was the criteria used for such allocation?

- (5) How did it develop that so many students were given the pre-requisites for residential scholarships but no room?
- (6) What is the role of the dean of students in these matters and did the dean exercise these functions and to what effect?
- (7) What is the role of an apparent post-holder called The Director of Community Services in these matters and did he exercise these functions and to what effect?
- (8) Are there a number of buildings on the campus either idle or under-used which could have been used for short-term housing of students?
- (9) Could not the officials of the University get together quickly and seek ways to end the crisis promptly? Was not the University aware that students were attending lectures while they had no place to stay?
- (10) Is it true that some Fiji students from Suva-Nausori area have faked addresses and acquired residential accommodation?
- (11) Is it true that some students have been given accommodation on the basis of personal preference of authorities?
- (12) Why were crucial people involved in the enrolment and settling down procedures for students in the early part of the semester wither absent or on leave? Can these officers not take their leave at more appropriate times?

Mr Savuro's letter revealed a startling news. A politician and a former minister is to become a Director at the University. This is amazing. The people of Fiji must voice strong objections to this as ex-politicians are not the people to hold sensitive posts at a University.

BALA KRISHNA,  
Loa Street,  
Suva.

## Banaban history

Sir. — Referring to the letter written by Ms K. Lanyon and Ms J. Copeland, I as a Banaban

would like to put forward a few sound truths concerning the two races.

First, and foremost, we're two different people.

Ocean Island or Banaba as we call it was first discovered in 1801 but the first reasonably detailed account of her inhabitants was not given until 1851. Evidence showed that her population was not Gilbertese, but described as "small bodied, squat, crinldy-haired and dark skinned." If any Gilbertese can qualify for the description then I would like to have the honour of meeting him/her.

Geographically, Banaba is about 3 miles long, 2½ miles wide and 6 miles in circumference. It is completely surrounded by a coral shelf and rises to a height at the centre of 280 feet. It also lies 250 miles to the west of the Gilberts.

May I point out to the smart ladies that 250 miles is definitely a very long distance. So how can they claim that Ocean Island is an uninhabited island of the Gilberts?

Apart from that, we Banabans are not ancestors of the so-called banishes thugs from the Gilberts. With the advent of war in the Pacific, Britain withdrew from Banaba and in October 1942 the Japanese came in. There was a severe shortage of food so the Banabans were deported to the Gilberts, the Carolines and Nauru.

But before all this, the British Government was negotiating the purchase of Rabi Island in the Fiji Group on behalf of the Banabans. Rabi was purchased in 1942 and the Banabans settled in it in 1945.

Britain took no steps to assert sovereignty over Banaba until after the discovery of the phosphate deposits. Even at this stage the Gilbertese had no idea of the existence of Ocean Island. In 1900 Banaba was annexed but it was not until 1916 that it was formally included as part of the newly constituted Gilbert & Ellice Island colony.

Therefore, the link between the Banabans/Gilbertese was

one of administrative convenience, arising from the discovery of the valuable mineral deposits and not because Banaba was an uninhabited island of the Gilberts.

As for our language, I admit we speak Gilbertese because the Banaban language is dying out. That doesn't mean we haven't a language of our own. Look up your Gilbertese dictionary for the meaning of the words "Nani, manana or "Nanmauge". Otherwise ask your great-grandparents or grand-parents and I can assure you that they'll inform you that the two words are Banaban words.

There are other differences in our traditions also also, e.g. in a Gilbertese wedding the bride follows the groom whereas in the Banaban it's the other way round.

Dig into the Banaban and Gilbertese history, find out more about their problems and their grievances and I can assure you that you will then have a better and broader understanding of the subject.

The Banabans had ever formed a part of the Gilbert Island whether geographically, politically or through social cohesion. She was in fact incorporated as part of the Gilberts solely by an unilateral decision on the part of the British Government in 1900, subsequent to and consequent on the discovery of incurative deposits of phosphate on the island.

MISS MIRIWA TAKOTI  
ROTAN,  
Adi Cakobau School,  
Sawani.

Fiji Times 14/3/79

# British MPs say Banaban case was mishandled

LONDON. — A number of British Members of Parliament yesterday accused the Labour Government of mishandling the plea of the Banaban people for their ancestral homeland, Ocean Island, to remain a separate British colony.

One politician, Sir Bernard Braine (Conservative), warned ministers in the House of Commons there would be conflict and bloodshed if they pushed ahead with the plan to include the island, (Banaba), in a new independent Gilbert Islands state later this year.

Foreign office under-secretary Evan Luard, who has just returned to Britain from talks in the Pacific on the long-standing dispute, said the British Government was conscious of the anxiety of the Banabans and wanted to

reach the right solution.

He said it was a difficult problem for the Gilberts were against the separation of Banaba from the group. He assured the lower house various alternatives and compromises had been explored, and promised a later statement after the Government had considered his report on his recent talks.

On the dangers of violence, Mr Luard said he met representatives of the Banabans in Rabi and Tarawa a few days ago and expressed the hope that an expedition of 150 Banabans which was then shortly to leave for Banaba would conduct itself in the island in an orderly way.

"While all Banabans have a right to enter Banaba whenever they wish provided their intentions are peaceful, I pointed out that further acts of violence would only alienate sympathy for their cause among their many well-wishers in Britain and elsewhere," he added.

During the Parliamentary exchanges, a leading Conservative spokesman on Commonwealth Affairs, Richard Luce, said it was more important to get a peaceful solution than a rapid solution.

Joan Lester (Labour) urged the Government to delay its independence legislation for the Gilbert Islands to meet the wishes of the Banabans.

The Banabans, who number between 2000 and 3000, were removed from Ocean Island to Rabi, 8000km away in the Fiji group, 30 years ago while the island's phosphate resources were exploited.



Fiji Times 6/3/79

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

the Americans. It's unkind to criticise people who speak with a foreign accent.

RAYMOND C. PILLAI  
USP  
Suva.

### Banaban claims

Sir, — With reference to a letter by Miss J Christopher, we would like to challenge her on her views, which we condemn as utter nonsense!

As Gilbertese, we would like to point out some of the "true facts" that Miss J. Christopher is trying to shy away from. As

far as we Gilbertese are concerned, the so-called Banaban race is an invented one which existed from thugs who were banished from the other islands of the Gilberts, and eventually ended up on another of our uninhabited island — Banaba. And later on, after realising the value of that scattered island, they decided to proclaim themselves as a separate race, but still imitating our traditional cultures and above all — our language. 'Calling themselves a race BUT without a language!! This is what we Gilbertese state as outrageous and shameful.

About the incident which occurred at Ocean Island, it was just another of their usual misfortunes. To be frank, those prisoners really deserve their treat, as they are a menace to society. The phosphate money which our Gilbertese government is receiving, is what we say as a one-tenth compensation for the usage of our scattered island.

So there you are, Miss J Christopher, put into mind that it's worth looking before you leap.

KALE I LANYON

JOSEPHINE COPELAND  
Raiwai  
Suva.

*7th Trust*  
**Banaban**  
**rights**

*1/3/79.*

Sir, — Allow me to express my wishes on the Banabans' violence on Ocean Island.

I, as a Banaban, am very concerned about my race and their national rights.

These people who have been arrested are my people. I'll say that whatever they have done is right. It's their country. They gave warning. So what were all these policemen and Gilbertese people trying to prove in blocking their way?

Banabans and Gilbertese are two different people. I suggest that the Gilbertese stick to the Gilberts and stop exploiting Ocean Island.

It seems that from the day they broke off from Tuvalu (formerly Ellice Islands), they have been interested in Ocean Island. I can't get what's so interesting on Ocean Island. Anyway, if there was anything interesting, what have these Gilbertese people got to do with it? They are from the Gilberts. So what's their business?

The British Government has

**LETTERS  
TO THE  
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made matters even worse. I think it's not giving us justice and is on the Gilbertese side.

Aren't the Gilbertese people ashamed to claim Ocean Island, as their own?

They should be ashamed for we are many miles apart in distance, custom and all.

JANET CHRISTOPHER,  
Adi Cakobau School,  
Suva.



*E* - Will Fiji be forced to take a stronger stand  
on the Banaban issue?

*Ratu Manu*

Fiji is in a very difficult position. We are trying to help them. Mr Evan Luard of the British Foreign Office has come here to discuss with me and with the Gilberts and Banaban leaders what steps to take.

As for the question of (Ocean Island

becoming an) associate state of Fiji. I had indicated to Rabi people their being in the Gilberts or out was a question entirely between them and the Gilbertese. But once they have succeeded in getting themselves out, there will be no problem about having Ocean Island as an associate state.

*Fiji Times 8/3/79*

# Gilberts

*Fiji Times*  
*16/3/79*

## offer

## review

The Gilbert Islands would accept an independent review of special constitutional provisions for the Banabans three years after their independence.

Fiji's Rabi Island Council Act would be looked at as a possible model for an Ocean Island Council, and the Gilberts would accept another Commonwealth country as mediator in disputes with the Banabans.

These latest Gilbertese offers on the Ocean Island row were announced in the British House of Lords on Tuesday.

Lord Goronwy-Roberts, in an official statement, said the Gilberts were ready to:

- Sign a treaty to let another Commonwealth Government act for the Rabi Council in settling claims or complaints by the Banabans, or else have such disputes settled by independent mediation or judicial process.

- Let an independent tribunal review Banaban constitutional matters three years after the Gilberts independence.

- Consider whether Fiji legislation on Rabi Island could be adapted for a Banaba Island Council.

The latest Gilbertese offer showed willingness to look at any proposal for protecting Banaban interests, he said.



*Ziji Times 15/3/79*

# Banabans out on bail

Fifteen Banabans arrested after a bomb-throwing incident on Ocean Island (Banaba) last month had been allowed bail, the chief registrar of the Gilbert Islands High Court, Mr Reete Boaki, said in Tarawa yesterday.

The Banabans were arrested on Ocean Island, transported to Tarawa and kept in custody for about three weeks.

Yesterday they were allowed out of prison on bail of \$500 each, the chief registrar said.

They were due to appear in court on Monday.

The chief registrar said the men were staying with relatives in Tarawa.

The Banabans are charged with intimidation and unlawful assembly.

*Siji Times 17/3/79*

# Banaban move rejected by Lords

Britain's House of Lords has defeated a move to separate Ocean Island from the Gilberts to independence later this year.

But a telex message to Suva from Banaban sources

in London yesterday said this was only after the first division seeking to exclude part of a colonial territory since Britain began dismantling its colonial empire after World War II.

And the "real battle" is now shaping in the House of Commons, according to the message.

Lord Brockway, a veteran anti-colonialist, moved an amendment to separate Banaba from the new Kiribati state, saying he was convinced it should be returned to the Banabans.

Sixteen Lords voted for the amendment and the Government side, led by Minister of State for the

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Lord Goronwy-Roberts, had to muster support to get 92 votes against, the message said.

Lady Elles, a Conservative Opposition front-bench spokesman, said her party would not advise its members to vote either for or against the amendment.

The chairman of the Justice for the Banabans campaign, Sir Bernard Braine, said later: "This has clearly shaken Government ministers.

"The real battle will now be in the House of Commons, where we have a very strong and well-informed all-

party support for Banaba self-determination."

The joint secretaries of the campaign said more than 200 Members of the House of Commons had so far pledged their support for the Banabans.



Fiji Times 13/3/79

# RABI A tropical paradise in search of a ticket to prosperity

by SEONA MARTIN

Rabi is one of your actual tropical paradise islands.

Arriving aircraft zoom in over a white, palm-studded beach and land on a coral sand, grass-tufted airstrip which shoots up the side of a hill.

Intrepid pilots say it is okay, as long as you remember to land uphill and take off pointing down.

It is a five-mile minibus ride around a Taveuni-type coastline and over some scary spots of what could be reasonable road with a bit of metal on top, to reach the Rabi "Government buildings" administration centre at Nuku.

The Press party which went to Rabi to cover discussions between Banaban leaders and British Under Secretary for Foreign And Commonwealth Affairs Mr Evan Luard accomplished the ride safely and relatively smoothly.

Mr Luard was less lucky. The chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders, the Rev Tebaiti Tawaka, declined to meet him at the airport as a demonstration of how the Banabans feel about Britain these days.

But he did not plan the flat tyre which kept Mr Luard sitting at the airstrip until the driver could run around, find another one and change the wheel.

Most of the vehicles sport a blank space where number plates and vehicle registrations should be.

## RABI LAWS

"Isn't it illegal?" the Press asked. "On Rabi, we are the law," a Banaban explained.

"We even have a bus driving around with one side missing."

But there are Rabi laws and a 40-member Banaban police force to enforce them, with a resident magistrate to sentence law-breakers to extra-mural terms.

There are plans for a gaol, but it has not yet been built.

There are some large, solid churches, however, and a hospital which is busy with mothers and babies.

Rabi has one of the highest birthrates in Fiji and there is little interest in family planning.

This attitude is possibly a product of nationalism, the desire to produce more Banabans to claim their Ocean Island homeland.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, feelings certainly run high and run deep through the entire Banaban community.

They want Ocean Island to be independent and they want their phosphate money.

It is easy to point a derogatory finger at the Banabans and question what they have done with the significant amounts of money which they have already obtained from phosphate royalties.

They have schools, hospital, churches and well-built, concrete homes; an airstrip and the financial ability to charter aircraft; a road and vehicles to go on it.

But a closer look shows building and road-maintenance equipment standing idle, Caterpillar tractors parked in front gardens for weeks on end, vehicles in the garage waiting repair and projects left unstarted or unfinished, often because of an apparent lack of technical know-how.

Some of the biggest investments the Banabans have made have begun turning sour.

Perhaps saddest of all is the absence of organised agricultural activity on Rabi.



THE British delegation at the meeting on Rabi, from left, Mr Peter Bacon of the British High Commission, the High Commissioner, Viscount Dunrossil; Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr Evan Luard, and his secretary, Mr John Dugan.

Young Banabans have grown up with the ability to buy food, rather than grow it, and are handier with the can opener than the caneknife.

The land is good, but people sit down to meals of tinned vegetables and fruits and meat brought from other islands.

"We had some cattle, but there was no expert to run a beef scheme," a Banaban leader said.

There are fish in the island's beautiful, clear waters, but the men who retain the old, highly-developed Banaban fishing skills apparently prefer to sell their catch in Taveuni than to bring it home.

They paddle their frail-looking outrigger canoes across to Taveuni in the late afternoon, and then back again late at night without fear or mishap.

They are perhaps safer out there than on the road.

## FRIGHTENED

Bouncing along, a Banaban recounted a tale about the driver, who had driven a tractor off the road some time before.

"There were lots of people hurt, all lying around crying and moaning," he said.

"The driver was so frightened he ran off, found his work supervisor and told him there had been a terrible accident.

"While the supervisor was running around trying to get help and find out where the accident was, this fellow ran back or lay down among the injured."

This sort of Rabi Island life is a long way from the conference rooms and courts of London, but the Banaban people do understand what is going on and what they want.

It was amply demonstrated to Mr Luard this week while he sat sweating on a mat in the community hall.

When he reiterated arguments which the Banabans had heard so often before, made promises they did not want and warned them of the possibility of arrest, even the control of the keepers of the peace snapped.

A Rabi policeman in his pale blue uniform suddenly stood up and hurled his black arm band at Mr Luard.

It was symbolic of the frustration the Banaban people are beginning to express.



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