

THE AUSTRALIAN
FINANCIAL REVIEW

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1973

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Beyond conscience money

WELL, we've taken out our consciences over Nauru, Papua New Guinea, the Aborigines and now Christmas Island and given them, or plan to give them, a good scrub with that excellent cleanser, money.

Isn't it about time we had a look at the one other blot on our drive to help the farmers at any price, Ocean Island?

Not that Ocean Island is a direct responsibility of Australia. In a somewhat underhand manner Britain annexed it while Australia moved in on Nauru after the Germans lost World War I.

The Banaban people on Ocean Island had the misfortune to become part of the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony, to have their land taken from them and to have the phosphate ripped out of it at a royalty which reached the dizzy height of what was then equivalent to about 20c a ton.

Back in the 1930s, in real-money terms, one outside authority estimated the Ocean Islanders, the Banabans, were subsidising the Australian farmer to the tune of \$200,000 a year in cheap phosphate.

Not that being British did the Banabans much good. When the Japanese struck, they were taken over just as surely as was Nauru, and they spent the war years as slave labour in places like the Marshall Islands, escaping massacre by what they now regard as a miracle.

* * *

WITH their money held in trust — and when it wasn't known if the Banabans still existed — Britain turned round and bought an island for them, Rabi in the Fiji group. It was at least a home and the meagre royalties from the phosphate provided an income.

They are now suing the British Government for retribution.

But much of the benefit that their deprivation gave the world went to Australian farmers and this puts us under an obligation too.

We can, of course, try to buy off the obligation by allowing Christmas Islanders Australian wages (this Indian Ocean island was the only uninhabited one so the people who work it now are migrants). We gave Nauru independence. But for the Banabans we need to go beyond money. We should be trying earnestly to find out what the Ocean Islanders need on their exiled home at Rabi.

Money is too easy a way to square off such an obligation.

The \$89 million that we are pouring into the Aboriginal people through the Federal Government can't recompense them for the loss of their land and, through the sense of territory, for their integrity as a people.

We can already see that money is causing as many problems as it is meant to cure.

* * *

HERE we need to go back to the root cause and this is land. The land should be identified and where possible restored.

White Australians have a right to be selfish, for instance, about the land that forms the heart of Sydney. It is a different matter when the land makes up a station lease that a British or Australian company "owns" and has abused over the years.

It also doesn't matter whether the Aboriginal people concerned make productive use of that land. As strong a conservational argument can be applied to returning it to its original hunting and gathering purposes — and its tribal territorial and religious purposes — as can be to the heavily subsidised productive "value" that we orthodoxly put on it.

Christmas Islanders are remote and their aspirations aren't known. But to pay them Australian wages, as Mr W. Morrison's department is examining, seems to be little more than a conscience-saver. Their true aspirations and the true nature of our responsibilities need to be discovered and made known — to us as well as them.

As for the Banabans, the Ocean Island people, their crying need seems to be for a future.

We have been negligent in the Pacific towards not only our direct responsibilities but our indirect ones as well.

Nowhere has this been more obvious than in our relations with the major island groups like Fiji, Samoa and the others. Mr Whitlam's one foray into the Pacific was so close to a disaster it was embarrassing. Of course Suva is not quite a centre of the world stage like Peking.

Now with new management at Foreign Affairs we might be prepared to listen rather than dictate, and learn, with some humility, what is morally rather than financially the right thing to do.

SUN

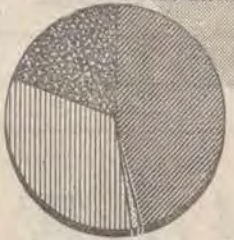
The world of energy

Consumption in 1972

CANADA



UNITED STATES



WORLD TOTAL
5478m tons oil equivalent

NO advanced industrial country can do other than pray that in the not-too-distant future technology will reduce the world's dependence on oil—which to a large extent means Arab oil and even more particularly Saudi Arabian oil.

The men responsible for investing hundreds of millions of pounds in the development of nuclear power, one of the most popular alternatives to oil, believe that while technology may indeed do the trick one day nothing is certain.

To some extent, all the alternative sources now enjoying vogue — nuclear, solar, geothermal, oil shale, tar sands, wind tides, coal gasification — will make their contribution.

But still they may not be able to replace oil.

People tend to forget what cheap, flexible fuel oil is.

One of the most important markets for oil is in transport and of the many alternative fuels only the tar sands and oil shale which are really alternative methods of producing oil, could conveniently replace today's oil.

Oil from new locations outside the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) is the only feasible alternative source to the huge Middle East reserves.

The continental shelves of the world and perhaps eventually the deep seabed itself can probably be exploited for the huge oil reserves they are almost bound to contain.

The environmentalists will fight some of these projects, but in many places the oil industry is likely to be allowed to explore and produce, just as it is exploring and producing today in the North Sea.

The North Sea is usually regarded as unimportant in world or even European terms, but only 18 months ago "The Economist" was almost alone in claiming that North Sea oil would meet Britain's needs some time in the 1980s.

Now it is generally accepted that the British Government has been overly cautious in its North Sea oil estimates and that there is a good chance that Britain may be exporting oil by 1985.

So there is some reason to be optimistic about the course of exploration in the rest of the North Sea, the Celtic Sea, the Atlantic approaches to the English Channel, off the northern coast of Norway and the deep seabed all the way up to Iceland.

Some of these waters are beyond the reach of existing technology, especially productive technology, but technological progress is almost certain by the 1980s and 1990s.

While no one can say how much oil will be discovered, seismic studies are encouraging, and there is a good chance that by

Fiji Times 22/7/76.

FTUC support

Sir — The Fiji Trades Union Congress has been keenly following the struggle of the Banabans for freedom which was highlighted by the recent demonstrations in Suva.

The FTUC fully sympathises with the Banabans cause and commits itself to giving them all necessary support in their fight for freedom.

The FTUC is requesting the British Trades Union Congress to make representation to the British Government to set the Banabans free, thus saving them from being obliterated as a race.

The management board of the FTUC will be meeting shortly to consider taking direct action locally in support of the Banabans' cause.

We call on the British Government to stop perpetuating colonialism and hand over Ocean Island to the Banabans, to whom it belongs.
— JAMES RAMAN, national secretary, FTUC.

Banaban thank you

Sir. — The Banaban community wishes to express its heartfelt thanks to all the people of Fiji who marched with the Banabans on Wednesday last week in support of their long struggle to right the injustices perpetrated on them under a colonial regime.

In addition to being a historic milestone in the Banabans' long march towards freedom, the protest served notice to Britain in the strongest possible terms that our cause lacks neither sympathy nor support and that we do not stand alone.

We reaffirm our intention to fight on, heartened by the overwhelming encouragement of our hosts, the people of Fiji. — T. TEAL, Secretary, Rabi Council of Leaders.

Future of the Banabans

From the Reverend Tebuke Rotan

Sir, As spokesman of the Banaban people here in London, it was a sad moment when I read the letter you published from the Gilbertese Chief Minister (February 6).

We do not blame the Gilbertese for our present plight. It is under the British Government that Ocean Island and the Banabans have seen their natural resources extensively exploited with little profit or benefit to themselves. Britain has sovereignty, and any decision in our case must come from Whitehall. We had hoped that the Chief Minister would not want the British Government to evade its responsibility for the past by turning the problem over to the Gilbertese.

I can hardly believe the Chief Minister really thinks we Banabans are Gilbertese. We have vast differences in our cultures. To quote H. E. Maude, Department of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, who lived amongst us and the Gilbertese for 40 years: "Forgotten in Gilbertese tradition, unrecorded in the Gilbertese genealogies, it may be doubted if a single Gilbert Islander was aware of the existence of the Banabans at the time of their first contact with Europeans." On Banaban culture, Maude writes: "Much of their (Banaban) social organization has, however, been recorded and this indicates that the structure was essentially different from that of the Gilbertese . . ."

The Gilbertese have agreed to the separation of the Ellice Islanders because they are a different people: seeing the evidence I have provided, will the Chief Minister now agree that the Banabans should also decide their own future?

The Chief Minister will agree that there is one custom shared generally in the Pacific Islands: It is contrary to our traditional beliefs for the people of one island to take something that belongs to the people of another.

When Gilbertese and Ellice Islanders agreed to British protection in 1892, Britain ignored Ocean Island and none of the leaders of the 16 Gilbert Islands asked that Ocean Island should be included in their group. Research done by Robert Langdon, a leading writer on Pacific affairs, has shown that after we were persuaded in 1900 to sell our birthright for £50 per year, the Law Officers of the Crown found that Ocean Island "became part of His Majesty's Dominions in consequence of the occupation by the Pacific Islands Company and their hoisting of the flag, together with the British sovereign's licence to occupy it". If we Banabans, unskilled in the ways of the Western world, agreed to licence a commercial company to excavate our lands, we never agreed that our homeland should be included with islands which were strange to us so that when Britain left, sovereignty over us would be handed to others. We were never asked if we wanted to

join the Gilberts, and if the British had asked us we would have refused. But we have had to watch the fruit of our land pay for the administration and running costs of a colony that was Britain's responsibility and of which we never considered ourselves part.

We were told we could not return to our homeland after the war, but we agreed to go to Rabi Island in Fiji and reside there only after the Commonwealth Office had made clear in their 1947 statement of intent that our rights to own, return to and reside on Ocean Island would be maintained. We struggled for survival in our strange, new environment and, to establish projects for our children's future, we borrowed money from an American bank in Fiji, and we are still borrowing money from other banks. All this while Britain's Gilbert and Ellice Colony Government was enjoying the bulk of the dwindling resources of our homeland. This year if we receive Australian \$3 million, they will collect A\$17 million, and their accumulated reserves are already very substantial.

Sometimes, it seemed that the spirit of the Banabans on Rabi was almost broken. But always in our soul there has been a vision. It is a vision of home. It is a vision that has sustained us and encouraged us in our fight to right what we consider to be great wrongs, even if that home on Ocean Island consists, after the phosphate has been excavated, of nothing but sharp-ended rugged pinnacles of coral.

In 1967 we came to London to try and get help. We had discussions with the Commonwealth Office and felt we owed it to ourselves to get the best advice we could. Had it not been for the experts in Fiji and Australia referred to by Mr Ratieta, our efforts might have been in vain. And now in London a great legal battle launched by us over the sharing of the proceeds and other aspects of our case is nearing its climax. It would not be proper for me to comment on that except to say that we could not fight this battle against the British Government without foreign lawyers.

But it should be understood that the question of independence goes much deeper than material matters, it touches on the Banaban soul. What we are now asking for, after all these years of tribulation, is the fundamental human right to control our destiny. We want Ocean Island to become independent in associated status with Fiji amongst whose people we have lived for 30 years. Using Rabi Island as our platform, we want to return once more to our ancestral homeland. We were our own masters before the British came and we must be our own masters again.

Yours faithfully,

TEBUKE ROTAN,

Rabi Council of Leaders,
Buckingham Court,
78 Buckingham Gate, SW1.

LETTERS TO THE

A debt we owe the Banabans

Sir,—I have never written to a newspaper before but now feel impelled to do so after reading James Cameron's moving article on the plight of the Banabans (January 17), Sir Bernard Braine's powerful condemnation of Britain's treatment of them over the years, and now Christopher Sweeney's article (January 21).

I remember being told that at the end of the war, Plymouth where my father lived as a child, appealed to the world at large for funds to help reconstruct their war-ravaged city.

Amongst the donations was the sum of £500 collected by the Banaban people who, at that moment, were living in exile in Mabi in Fiji, where they had been taken weary, sick and much reduced in numbers as a result of maltreatment in Japanese forced labour camps.

It is impossible for any reasonable decent person not to feel shame at the treatment meted out to these gentle people by generations of British colonial civil servants—particularly in view of their generous and spontaneous support for us in our time of need. Surely the time has come for this country to make full amends for this disgraceful episode in our colonial history.

Olivia Donnelly.

London WC 2.

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DOWN TO EARTH the NLTB story

RATU SUKUNA AND TIKINA TOKATOKA

ON MAY 17 1950, at Visama village, Nakelo, Tailevu, Ratu Sukuna was ready to present to the people of Tikina Tokatoka his recommendations about Fijian reserves which he would forward to the Native Land Trust Board for final approval.

The process of reserving Fijian lands was as the Fiji Times noted, a "complicated and strenuous task" which was "one of his most remarkable achievements."

One reason for the difficulty in reserving land was the need to strike fair balances between equally worthwhile objectives.

On the one hand as, Ratu Sukuna noted, he and others were "ushering in a new era for the Fijian during which it is hoped that much social and material progress may be attained."

At the same time the Native Land Trust Board had long wanted "the retention of the village community while encouraging the production of 'money' crops by its members on a communal basis."

Ratu Sukuna felt Fijians should not claim reserves just for their own sake, especially if they were not using it.

Population

On the other hand, he wanted to ensure that Fijian land needs in the year 2000 would be provided for.

Ratu Sukuna told the people of Tokatoka: "In 1919 at the time of the Maxwell Commission, you numbered 459 males and 389 females."

"In 1948 when the preliminary inquiries were being held, you had increased to 519 males and 488 females."

The tikina had roughly 1900 acres which included 60 acres

A Native Land Trust Board official continues the story of the Fijian reserves.

of Crown Schedule A land and 150 acres of leased land.

Ratu Sukuna noted: "As is the case with all flat land in the Rewa delta, soil productivity in this area very largely depends on physical features."

He described their four main blocks of land.

High grounds

"You have a long strip of slightly elevated land which runs along the boundary of the old tikina of Tokatoka and Nuku and joins on the right bank of the Wainibokasi River, a similar strip extending downstream as far as Naivasi creek."

"Secondly, you have another piece of high ground... situated close to and south of the tikina school."

"Nearly three-quarters of the area is under forest or secondary growth."

"This central area is also well drained and fertile."

East of the two blocks, said Ratu Sukuna, "you have some of the lowest lying land in the delta and you have also the Nasilai branch of the Wainibokasi."

"This river is tidal, slow flowing and has low banks, especially on your side along the tongue of land formed by the river and the Dravodravo inlet."

"Mangrove and saltwater not only cut into this point of land from both sides, but also into

the low lying, lumpy and semi-wooded alluvial area through the numerous arms and channels."

Ratu Sukuna explained what happened with land like this.

"In this type of flat country rainwater runs into creeks where the inclination is favourable; but, over a large area, it can do no more than settle down in depressions to create the marshland which is so common here and which is, in many localities, uncultivable through tidal infiltration and overflow."

Detailing the land north of these blocks, Ratu Sukuna called it "low lying with numerous swamps, due partly to the nature of the ground and in part to your neglect of drainage."

He said that in some areas around Nabitu and Lomainsau "rice could be grown... even as things are now."

Seepage

He added: "Cane might be attempted" on part of the land, but only after approved drains had been put in.

East and south of Lomainsau village, said Ratu Sukuna, "saltwater seepage occurs widely and native crops are only grown in selected and prepared plots."

"This block is distinctive because, though large and compact and subject to saltwater seepage north, east and south, most of it is good rice land."

To encourage the people in this endeavour, he added that his information on rice growing was "according to expert authority."

Ratu Sukuna summarised their situation.

"Let me put into concise form the facts that interest you most and at the same time give an overall picture that may be useful to the Native Land Trust Board when it comes to consider our recommendations."

"Tokatoka has an area of about 1900 acres more or less - all the figures given here are approximate - of which 1840 acres are native land and 60 acres crown schedule A."

1690 acres

"In 1940 when this commission was appointed you had 180 acres under lease; today the total is 150, leases around Nakaile village amounting to 30 acres having in the meantime fallen in."

You have at the present time in your possession 1690 acres of land, of which 700 acres are of very little value from the cash crop point of view."

"In your proprietary units you have 1000 male and female members."

"Your reserve claims come to a total of 1880 acres which includes the 60 acres of crown schedule A land and 130 acres of leases."

"The commission is recommending a total of 1780 acres consisting of the areas you now hold, 30 acres of crown schedule A and 60 acres of leased land - a number of leases have expired."

● NEXT: The Tokatoka decisions.

EASTER SPECIALS



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Japanese join Deuba project

Pacific Hotels and Developments yesterday announced a major move to expand the Pacific Harbour resort on Fiji's Coral Coast.

The managing director, Mr Gerald Barrack, said a giant Japanese construction company would be involved.

Taisei Corporation, of Tokyo, would be a partner in the venture with Southern Pacific Properties, the Pacific Hotels and Developments holding company.

An agreement had been reached to form a joint venture company, SPP-Taisei.

"Taisei Corporation believes Fiji will become the most significant destination in the South Pacific for Japanese tourists," Mr Barrack said.

"This joint venture will provide a vehicle for Japanese investment in Fiji."

"It will pave the way for Japanese tourist inflow which will follow the start of direct air services between Fiji and Japan."

Pacific Harbour, the biggest recreation development of its kind in the Pacific, is at Deuba, 35 miles from Suva.

Construction of the 1150-acre first stage began in 1970.

Featuring a resort hotel, luxury villas, waterways, a golf course and other sporting facilities, it became fully operational in 1974.

About \$30 million has been invested in the project so far.

Mr Barrack said it would involve a final investment of nearly \$200 million.

The agreement with Taisei Corporation followed visits to Fiji by the company's executives.

"This new venture will give a valuable boost to tourism and Fiji's economic growth," he said.

Southern Pacific Properties is a major resort developer with substantial interests in Fiji and the Middle East.

Through its holdings in Travelodge Australia, it controls the largest chain of hotels in the South Pacific.

Main shareholders in Southern Pacific Properties include the P. and O. shipping line and Trust Houses Forte.

Taisei Corporation is one of the 20 largest corporations in Japan.

THE ROVING EYE AT OCEAN ISLAND



ABOVE: The administration and information officer from Rabi, Mr Teto Christopher (right) stands at the rail of Ai Sokula as he and other members of the group wait for GEIC officials to issue them with special licences to allow them ashore at Ocean Island.

RIGHT: Banaban women living at Ocean Island welcome members of the Rabi group ashore at the island jetty.

Pictures and words by Fiji Times staff reporter LEONE VUETIVAVALAGI.

THE Banaban people have begun a new era with the settlement at Ocean Island, their ancestral homeland, of a group of men and women from Rabi, the island in Fiji where most of them settled after World War II.

The "immigrants" are living in tents shipped from Australia on the phosphate ship Temple Hall, which arrived at the island last Wednesday, two days after the Rabi Holdings ship Ai Sokula landed the Rabi group there.

The Banabans' return to Ocean Island is an attempt to draw world attention to their claims for independence from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, association with Fiji, and substantial compensation from the British Government and the British Phosphate Commissioners for the depreciations of phosphate mining in the island.

PHOSPHATE ROYALTIES

Most Banabans have been away from Ocean Island since World War II, when the Japanese invasion in 1942-1946, moved them to neighbouring islands.

After the war, they moved to Rabi, in the Fiji group, which they bought with phosphate royalties.

There, they have concentrated mostly on copra planting and, more recently, investment development to ensure them an income when the phosphate runs out.



RIGHT: After a tour ashore at Nauru, one member of the Rabi group lies exhausted on a hatch cover as Ai Sokula sets sail for Ocean Island.

LEFT: A Banaban official at Ocean Island, Mr Samuel Kaipati (right) welcomes ashore a Rabi island councillor, Mr Moutu Rewi.

BELOW: One of the four women who travelled with the group from Rabi gets a helping hand as she descends to Ai Sokula's launch to cross to the island jetty.



THIS STONE MARKS THE GIFT OF OFA FELLIS WHEN FIRST SETTLED THIS ISLAND IN MAY 1900. THE BRITISH FLAG WAS FIRST FLOWN THIS PLAQUE WAS UNVEILED ON 27 AUGUST 1960 TO COMMEMORATE THE JUBILEE OF HIS LANDING.

"What are you doing Inoke?"
 "... just doodling Kolora..."
 "Let me see..."

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... everybody knows that, you silly man. Wow! 15%. Come, let's go shopping Inoke."

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ABOVE: A Rabi man carries his bedding ashore on arrival at Ocean Island. RIGHT: The leader of the Rabi group, Mr Tekosi Rotan, points out to the men the area which needs clearing for their new site to settle in. The men rejected a previously prepared site because it was too exposed.



ABOVE: The works engineer of the British Phosphate Commissioners at Ocean Island, Mr Robert Forrester, points out the memorial erected to Albert Ellis, who discovered phosphate at the island in May 1900.

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 SUVA SERVICE CENTRE.

Workers' battle

From STEWART RUSSELL in Buenos Aires

HISTORY is good box office in Argentina today.

Young film directors are reaping both financial and critical reward as they dramatise events in their country's past from a leftwing Third World viewpoint.

In the process they are treading on the toes of some of the traditional power groups, foreign investors, big landowners and the army.

Two current successes of the healthy local industry recreate conflicts which pitted striking workers against "neo-colonialist" bosses and uniformed forces of repression in the first quarter of this century.

In both films, union organisers are the heroes and the workers the tragic martyrs.

The villains are landowners, soldiers and executives of the foreign firms, mostly British, which controlled large slabs of Argentina's economy in the between-war years.

The film *Quebracho* flashes back through the struggles of three generations of forestry workers in the northern Chaco area, seeking better wages and working conditions from the London-appointed managers who set up a private police force and hire gunmen to keep them in their place.

Big strike

La Patagonia Rebelde (Patagonia in Revolt) dramatises army repression of an anarchist movement which brought such diverse groups as dockworkers, hotel waiters and gauchos (cowboys) together in a general strike in the southern provinces in 1921.

Both films have attracted international attention and their makers have hopes of showing them commercially outside South America.

Quebracho, directed by Ricardo Wulicher, won a special award at this year's

is good box office

Karlovy-Vary film festival in Czechoslovakia.

La Patagonia Rebelde, by Hector Oliveira, carried off the second prize Silver Bear from the Berlin festival.

The quebracho is a tree, unique to Argentina, cultivated for its bark which produces tannin, used for curing hides.

The film begins and ends with melancholic shots of the now-deserted factory on the forestal plantation and in between, in semi-documentary style, records the series of conflicts in which the workers were always bloodied and usually beaten.

Conflict

La Patagonia Rebelde is technically the better film, not only because its production values are as high as most European or North American products, but also because it achieves dramatic conflict of personalities by fusing historical characters into a handful of key figures — notably an army colonel and an anarchist leader.

It is also the more controversial, because it dredges up historical facts many Argentines would prefer to leave buried.

It shows strikers lined up to dig their own graves before being shot. Workers' leaders executed after accepting surrender terms and ruthless reprisals against innocent associates of the strikers.

Screening of *La Patagonia Rebelde* was stalled for several months while the army, which is still represented on the Argentine film censorship board, argued for cuts.

But eventually it was allowed to run intact, promptly leaping into first place in the local box office ratings, even against

competition like the Oscar-winning *The Sting*.

Equally promptly, it was banned in neighbouring Uruguay, whose military leaders thought, probably quite rightly, that it might provoke unrest.

In fact the army colonel commanding the repression, whose real life equivalent was murdered in revenge in Buenos Aires a few years later, is not a totally unsympathetic character.

Rather, the film implies, he was a good soldier obeying orders passed down to him from corrupt civilian politicians representing the interests of the foreign-dominated Patagonian landowners and businessmen.

The colonel is played by an actor named Hector Alterio, who is the revelation of the Argentine cinema after 20 years as a bit part actor.

Love affair

He also has a part in *Quebracho* and takes the lead in another box office hit, nothing to do with history or politics, called *la Tregua* (The Truce) from the novel of the same name by Uruguayan author Mario Benedetti.

This recounts the twilight love affair of a middle-aged clerk, nearing retirement, with a girl young enough to be his daughter.

The film is obviously sentimental, but never mawkish.

Most critics see far more merit in it than in the much-publicised *Mary* in which world middleweight boxing champion Carlos Monzon, in his first film role, strips off for a different kind of action with curvaceous Susana Gikenez.

The Argentine cinema these days provides something for almost every taste.

—AAP-Reuters.



QANTAS' Fiji manager, Mr Brian Inglis watches the Minister for Labour, Mr Jonati Mavoia, sign the visitor book at the opening of the Captain's Club, a VIP lounge in the new terminal building at Nadi Airport. The airline spent more than \$30,000 on furnishing it.



THE airline's service manager at Nadi, Mr Don Greenway (centre), with some of his staff (from left) Mr Beato Ratuloco, Miss Lini Tui, Mrs Nancy Sauto and Mr Vinod Maharaj.

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"JEEVAN MRITYU" (G)
 Saturday at 10am
"ROTI KAPADA AUR MAKAN" (G)

Tonight at 8
 Dharmendra and Supriya in
"BEGAANA" (G)

Today at 2pm, tomorrow at 2pm and 8pm, Thursday at 2pm, Saturday at 1.30pm, and 4.30pm and on Sunday at 1.30pm, 4.30pm and 7.45pm
ALL TIME RECORD SMASHER.

"ROTI KAPADA AUR MAKAN" (G)

Tonight at 8
"THE THING WITH TWO HEADS" (A)
 Today and tomorrow at 10am also on Thursday at 10am and 8pm

"ROTI KAPADA AUR MAKAN"

PENFRIENDS

S.V. Prakash (18), P.O. Box 315, Ba, would like penfriends from anywhere. His hobbies are driving, singing, films and reading.

Uday Pal (17), P.O. Box 116, Nadi College, Nadi, is interested in corresponding with anyone. His hobbies are driving, riding, swimming and stamp collecting.

Reeta Sharma (19), c/- B.M. Sharma (guard), Quarters No. G-185-A, Loco side 8 Agra Cantt., India, is interested in penfriends from Fiji. Her hobbies are collecting stamps, viewcards and seeing films.

Hemant Kumar (17), 308 Fletcher Road, Vatuwaqa, Suva, would like penfriends from anywhere. His hobbies are soccer, films and reading.

Ba prison visitors

Father Thomas Daly has been appointed chairman of the Ba Prison visiting committee.

The committee's other members, all of whom will serve until February 1977, are Pandit Atma Ram Gaina, Mr R.C. Bali, Ratu Apsai Naevo, Mr Francis Lewis and Mr Leone Doi.

Lautoka branch elects officers

Mr Eric Peterson has been elected president of the Lautoka branch of the Fiji Society for the Intellectually Handicapped.

Other officials are: Vice-presidents, Mr S. Samlal, Mr B.L.R. Dass; secretary, Mrs Dorothy Walker; treasurer, Mr D.L. Reddy.

RECORD

CIVIL CASE

COSTS £¾m

By JAMES O'Driscoll
High Court Reporter

IT was "litigation on the grand scale" observed Mr Justice Megarry, the Vice Chancellor, as he started giving judgment yesterday on day 222 of a record-breaking civil law case which so far has cost £750,000 in legal costs.

The judge then launched into his judgment, at a rate approaching 200 words to the minute. He is expected to finish it some time on Friday.

The cases arises over 75 years of phosphate mining in Ocean Island, in the South Seas, the natural home of a small population known as Banabans.

The 500 Banabans, who were forced to go and live in Rabi Island, 1,500 miles away after the Japanese invasion in the last war, want to go home.

Fishing hopes

In their action they claim that the phosphate mining has changed the surface of the 1,500 acres of Ocean Island and that it no longer bears its natural food trees, such as coconut, and other vegetable shrubs.

Their High Court claim is against the BRITISH GOVERNMENT and the BRITISH PHOSPHATE COMMISSIONERS. They are asking Mr Justice Megarry to rule that their island home should be replanted with food-bearing trees so they can return and build up a viable fishing industry.

The also claim additional mining royalties from the BRITISH PHOSPHATE COMPANY. Their total claim comes to £21 million.

The islanders court fight is led by 70-year-old Mr ROTAN TITO. He was not in court yesterday but the REV. TEBUKE ROTAN was there to represent his fellow islanders, sitting immediately behind their counsel.

The previous longest civil action, the Tichborne inheritance claim, more than 100 years ago, lasted 103 days. But a criminal trial which followed lasted a further 183 days.

In the current case Mr Justice Megarry took his court, accompanied by lawyers, to see the island. Five QCs and four junior counsel together with solicitors have been engaged throughout. Seven million words have been given in evidence.

For the start of yesterday's judgment the public gallery was opened — the first time any public gallery has been opened at the High Court since the bomb outrage at the Old Bailey in 1973. There was strict security.

Farmers 'reaped benefits'

— COURT TOLD

From CHRIS MILNE

LONDON, Thurs. — Australian and New Zealand farmers have benefited at the expense of a group of Pacific Islanders, the High Court has been told.

The claim has been made by counsel for the former inhabitants of Ocean Island.

The Banabans from Ocean Island — who are now living on Rabi Island in the Gilbert Group — have launched a claim for about \$33.4 million against the British Government in the High Court.

They are seeking the amount in compensation for "a gross under valuation" in royalties paid for phosphate mined from the island since 1913.

The High Court was told this week the main beneficiaries of cheap phosphate from Ocean Island were Australian and New Zealand farmers.

ROYALTIES

The new action follows a 106-day hearing earlier this year of the islanders' claim against the British Government and the Phosphate Commissioners — jointly owned by Britain, Australia and New Zealand — to have Ocean Island rehabilitated.

A representative of the islanders, Mr Tebuke Rotan, who came to London for the High Court hearing, said the latest claim was against the British Government, as trustees for the islanders, and not against Australia or New Zealand.

The Banabans' Council of Leaders was seeking the extra royalties both to develop Rabi Island, where they had been resettled, and to develop Ocean Island for an eventual return.

"We hope to go back to Ocean Island," he said.

"But development will be necessary before it will support us."

Much development was



"We need a lot of capital to develop agriculture," he said.

Plans included the raising of cattle on Rabi, if capital could be secured.

Mr Rotan said he would be returning to Rabi next week, but he and several islanders would come back to London in February to give evidence in the High Court hearing.

also needed on Rabi Island.

"Our people find life very hard on Rabi," he said.

"We have coconut plantations, but the price of copra is poor.

"And the fishing is not good.

Melbourne
"Herald"
20/12/75

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Appeals to the Privy Council

From Mr Benedict Birnberg and Mr Gareth Peirce

Sir, As we initiated the correspondence on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which resulted in your leader "Counsel for the Council" (August 30) may we be permitted a rejoinder?

The appellate courts in this country and in particular the highest, seldom attract the attention of a journalistic eye. It was therefore more than ordinarily disappointing that your leader canvassed none of the criticisms put in the preceding correspondence but instead took a defensive line to an attack that had not been made.

Far from wishing the abolition of the Privy Council, we instead deplored the restrictiveness with which its members and others view its role. We urged that this role, and thereby the considered opinion of distinguished Law Lords, should be extended, not, as your editorial suggested, to entertaining political or moral argument, but to providing some more concerned supervisory function over systems of law that otherwise lack the normal safeguards of criminal trials in the United Kingdom.

Where a judgment is given, as in Singapore, by judges who also constitute jury, findings of fact and law are often no longer clearly distinguishable in their reasonings. It can emerge on subsequent analysis that the finding is patently wrong. An appellant is nevertheless precluded from having such a case considered further, as he is in this country also, in an appeal from the Court of Appeal to the House of Lords if he cannot distil from that wrongness an error purely legal.

Thus there are seen, from time to time, *causes célèbres* where public and legal opinion are as one in believing a man innocent but where the Courts cannot, because of badly worded, unthinking or unimaginative legislation or, more seriously, because of their own disbelief in their potential powers, feel able to do otherwise than refuse further redress.

We applaud the existence of an appellate body of the calibre of the Privy Council and indeed consider there is a strong case for its metamorphosis into the often mooted Supreme Court of the Commonwealth as a medium for the development and harmonization of the best in our common law tradition. We would wish only that criminal jurisprudence could benefit more frequently from its consideration than at present and that more applicants from the Commonwealth, in the airing of the issues in their respective cases, might simultaneously benefit their fellow countrymen, should scrutiny in the Privy Council point up defects in the legal system so considerable that it becomes no longer necessary to term them errors of law or fact.

Yours faithfully,
BENEDICT BIRNBERG,
GARETH PEIRCE,
89 Borough High Street, SE1,
September 9.

Unrest in South Pacific islands

From Sir Bernard Braine, Conservative MP for Essex, South-East

Sir, Your thought-provoking leader, "UDI in the South Pacific", September 3, rightly draws attention to the difficulties arising for metropolitan powers during the decolonization process.

However, you implied that the wish of the Banaban people for the return of sovereignty over Ocean Island is founded upon an unwillingness to share their phosphate wealth. The truth is that the main recipients of this wealth for the past 75 years have been Great Britain, which as the administering power has insisted on extracting from it over half the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony annual budget, and Australia and New Zealand, whose farmers have for years been able to buy Ocean Island phosphate at well below world prices.

In any event, these phosphates will be exhausted in 1978. Therefore, there will be no wealth from this source either for the Banabans or anyone else. The real issue is whether the Banabans should have the benefit of the last three years' production in order to restore their devastated homeland thus providing for their future existence as a people, or whether Britain, by refusing them independence, should continue, at Banaban expense, to subsidize the Treasury's responsibilities towards the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony.

The position regarding Bougainville is not parallel since the vast copper deposits are likely to last not three years but very much longer.

While Bougainville, as part of Papua New Guinea is primarily an Australian Government responsibility, it nevertheless concerns Britain for two reasons:

(i) it has been, until September 16 this year, a United Nations Trust Territory and Britain, as a member, must therefore share responsibility for the consequences of vesting this sovereignty in a unitary PNG Government;

(ii) it is of further significance to Britain that following the attempted secession of Bougainville from PNG the whole of the Western Islands District of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (comprising a third of its population) has asked through its District Council to join Bougainville.

In April this year I visited the GEIC, Ocean Island and Fiji with my colleague Mr John Lee, MP. Our joint report, submitted to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, called for an immediate round table conference to which Britain should invite Australia, New Zealand and Fiji in order that the Banaban dispute should be settled in the spirit of Commonwealth cooperation. Sadly, our recommendations were ignored.

The situation is drifting perilously. It is not surprising, therefore, that the shadows are lengthening across the Pacific.

As in the case of the Banaban issue, there is surely an urgent need arising out of Britain's responsibility for the Solomons to discuss these matters with our Commonwealth partners in the Pacific while there is still time to prevent a proliferation of Anguilla-like situations or worse.

Yours faithfully,
BERNARD BRAINE,
House of Commons,
September 12.

From Mr Grenville Jones

Sir, May I as an economic and constitutional adviser to both the Government of Bougainville (now styling itself the Independent Republic of the North Solomons) and the Rabi Council of Leaders representing the Banaban people,

comment on your leader (September 3) "UDI in the South Pacific"?

You rightly stress the dangers of possible fragmentation while, at the same time, underlining the need for small island communities, with strong nationalistic feelings, to work together. This is precisely what both the peoples of Banaba and Bougainville have been and are trying to do.

The Banabans, who were never consulted over their incorporation as part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, have for long protested about their treatment. Although the Banabans fund over half the GEIC budget, they receive no benefits and have no representation either in the GEIC House of Assembly or in the various government departments. They want associated status with Fiji where most of them have been living since 1945 while at the same time seeking economic cooperation with the GEIC (surely the exact opposite of fragmentation?). However they are adamant that they alone should not shoulder the whole financial burden, but that this should be shared equitably—the brunt being borne by those governments (United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand) who have for the past 75 years reaped the benefits of phosphate mining.

The situation of Bougainville differs in that the discovery of copper was a relatively recent event though Bougainvillean nationalism long preceded this. Despite their strong nationalistic feelings, one of the Bougainvillean leaders, Fr John Momis, Member for Bougainville in the Papua New Guinea House of Assembly, was deputy chairman of the PNG constitutional planning committee specially set up for the purpose of creating a constitution for an independent PNG which, while preserving the unity of the territory, would nevertheless recognize the ethnic and cultural differences between the various peoples comprising that state.

After several years of deliberation resulting in the creation of a constitution that seemed to reflect the aspirations of all the peoples of PNG, the PNG Government, ignoring the recommendations of the constitutional planning committee, have effectively gagged debate in order to force through the PNG House of Assembly a constitution which bears little resemblance to that originally and democratically agreed upon. Hence the declaration of independence by the Bougainville Provincial Government.

What is also disturbing is the attitude of both the administering powers concerned, the United Kingdom and Australia. The underlying reason for their policies seems the desire, on the one hand of the British Government, to avoid any charge to the Treasury through a total or partial loss of phosphate money from Banaba, while in the case of Australia, Bougainville is bundled with PNG for similar reasons.

In view of the bloodshed suffered in the past as a result of coercing the diverse peoples of new nation states into accepting colonial boundaries drawn in the distant past without regard for ethnic, cultural or geographical realities, is it too much to ask that these lessons should be learnt and a more statesmanlike approach adopted towards the feelings and political aspirations of large minorities? Fragmentation should, if possible, be avoided, but surely the regrouping of islands such as Banaba and Fiji, or Bougainville with the whole or part of the British Solomons, should be welcomed.

Yours faithfully,
GRENVILLE JONES,
22 Charing Cross Road, WC2,
September 11.

Administration of national parks

From the Chairman of North Yorkshire County Council

Sir, Mr John Cadbury and those associated with him in his letter of September 5 clearly wish to reopen the debate on whether national parks should be operated by independent planning boards or, as most now are, by county councils through national park committees. They are entitled to advocate boards as I am entitled to prefer controls of services which directly affect local people to be with elected councils rather than ad hoc boards with separate precepting powers.

Where I take issue with them is in their attempt to show that such domestic difficulties as exist between the Yorkshire Dales National Park Committee and the North Yorkshire County Council aid their arguments. The county council has in fact given the Park Committee wider powers than it was required to do by the Local Government Act 1972. It has not refused to allow the committee to buy Wherri- side Manor but only to make extra money available in this financial year to enable it to do so. It is currently negotiating better salaries with park wardens and is looking again at the needs of the county for additional footpaths officers.

Such issues are best dealt with locally and this is why, at the request of the Park Committee, the chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee and myself, together with our vice-chairmen, will be meeting representatives of the committee for discussions in the near future. They add nothing to the argument about the respective merits of control through boards or councils any more than does the fact that the present annual expenditure on national parks is only about £3m since that total is principally determined by the amount of money central government makes available for national park purposes.

I sympathize with the frustration which your correspondents must feel in seeing the fulfilment of their wishes for national parks hampered by lack of money—it is easy for me to do so because my wish for the parks to succeed is no less than theirs. But surely we all know why money for vital public services is short. Coincidentally their letter was published on the same day that Department of the Environment Circular No 88/75 arrived on my desk—the latest and most pressing of a series of central government directives urging local authorities to cut public expenditure in the national interest. Unfortunate though it may be, can any public service expect to be immune from the effects of the economic crisis we now all face?

Yours faithfully,
JAMES T. FLETCHER, Chairman,
North Yorkshire County Council,
County Hall,
Northallerton,
September 11.

THE FIJI TIMES

ESTABLISHED 1869

Second Century No. 1722.

MONDAY, MARCH 24, 1975

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OCEAN ISLAND WELCOMES 60 FROM FIJI RABI SETTLER GROUP STAYS



The Rabi Holdings ship *Ai Sokula* is on her way back to Fiji after landing 60 Banabans from Rabi Island in Ocean Island.

By staff reporter Leone Vuetivavalagi, who travelled to Ocean Island with the Banabans.

● SPECIAL PICTORIAL FEATURE TOMORROW

When the Banabans arrived in their homeland last week, they received a typical Pacific welcome from their kinsmen.

The landing from *Ai Sokula* was delayed because the group had to obtain special permits to enter the island, which the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony declared a "closed area."

But after this people on the jetty flocked to welcome back their kinsmen.

Most of those on the jetty were indigenous Banabans who have been working on the island for more than 20 years under the British Phosphate Commissioners.

The Fiji group, led by the managing director of

Rabi Holdings, Mr Lekesi Rotan, went to the Banaban community settlement, where food and entertainment were provided that night.

Everyone on the island greeted the group and treated them in friendly manner.

ENGINE TROUBLE

There was only one complication — there was no temporary accommodation available for the group on the island.

Most of them except for those who had relatives ashore, had to sleep on board the ship.

The phosphate ship *Temple Hall*, carrying tents and most of the equipment for the group from Australia, was delayed because she developed engine trouble.

She broke a crankshaft on her way to the island and had to travel on one engine.

This delayed her by about three days.

NOT HAPPY

Because of this, the original time for the departure of *Ai Sokula* on her return trip to Fiji had to be delayed so the group could sleep on board until their tents arrived.

Mr Rotan asked the BPC manager on the island, Mr Edgar Chapman, for help in providing the group with temporary accommodation and transport until the phosphate ship carrying their equipment arrived.

Mr Rotan said Mr Chapman was not too happy about this and said the commissioners could do nothing to help.

When they arrived, the group heard from those on the island that a site had been cleared for them to settle.

When Mr Rotan inspected the site next morning, he decided it was too exposed to the heat.

He decided to clear an alternative site.

LEFT BARE

Members of the group then began work on clearing a site near the phosphate pinnacles which are a feature of the island.

Most of the land is badly scarred with the pinnacles, left bare after the

phosphate was mined around them.

Most of those in the group from Rabi had not been on the island for more than 20 years but some were on their first trip to their homeland.

Among this small group is Naomia Tona (18), of Nuku village.

He was born in Rabi and had to leave his parents and relatives to go on the trip.

He said he was sad to leave but he soon got over the feeling and began thinking of the expedition, and what lay ahead.

DRINKING KAVA

On their way from Rabi, members of the group lazed away their time on the ship drinking kava, telling stories playing guitars and singing songs.

They said that the trip in *Ai Sokula* was good and they enjoyed every minute of it.

GEIC officials who went to the island in the 69-ton Government ship *Nureau*

boarded *Ai Sokula* when she arrived.

They asked the skipper, Captain Frank Mitchell, whether an Opposition Member of Parliament, Mr Apisai Tora, was on board.

The boarding party said they had special instructions from their Government to look for Mr Tora on board.

NO REASON

If they found him they were to stop him from landing on the island.

They gave no reason for this.

The group of 36 Banabans from Fiji who stayed behind on the island will be the core of those moving in to repopulate their homeland.

Mr Rotan is expected back in Fiji today, while *Ai Sokula* is expected by Thursday.

WEATHER

Forecast: Showers, some thunderstorms. Details P6.

ABOVE: In high spirits, some of the Banabans prepare to leave *Ai Sokula* on their way to the jetty at Ocean Island.

BELOW: Under a welcoming sign, one of the four women who travelled with the group meets some of her relatives and other members of the Ocean Island community.



OTHER PAGES

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- THREE
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- FOUR
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- BACK
Sprinter close to injury

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PARSON PLANNED RISING TO GET ISLAND JUSTICE

Telegraph of 1/12/47

By JAMES O'DRISCOLL, High Court Reporter

THE Rev. Tebuke Rotan, 46, a Methodist minister from Ocean Island, about 12,000 miles away, sat quietly in the High Court yesterday, as Mr Justice MEGARRY told of a plan he led for an uprising and "wholesale murder" of a British adviser and his followers who, they believed, were cheating them of royalties on mining of rich phosphates.

Mr Rotan, representing the 500 islanders, had told him in earlier evidence, said Mr Justice Megarry, that he had led the "uprising plan" to get rid of their District Adviser, Mr Laxton, and his followers.

Mr JUSTICE MEGARRY was giving judgment on the 223rd day—a record—of a civil law action over phosphate mining brought by the islanders against the BRITISH GOVERNMENT and the BRITISH PHOSPHATE COMMISSIONERS.

The judge ruled that the Crown has no financial duty to the islanders. The Crown's obligation was governmental and although there had been grave breaches of that obligation the court was powerless.

"The Crown was, traditionally, the fountain of justice — and justice is not confined to what is enforceable in the courts.

"I shall accordingly leave the Attorney-General to make such communications to other persons concerned as he considers proper."

Man they trusted

Mr Rotan, said the judge, had told him in evidence: "I asked 400 of our men to arm themselves with spears and knives and we made a plan to kill Laxton, our adviser, and his followers.

"We could not stand paying someone whom we trusted to look after our interests—and did not."

The plan, observed the judge, was for the "wholesale murder of fellow-countrymen with different political views in order to prevent the minority becoming the majority."

But the prompt action of a District Officer from Fiji who had been called in had prevented the uprising.

Those facts, observed Mr Justice Megarry, showed the state to which the islanders—known as the Banabans—had reached by that time over the phosphate mining of their small island.

It arose, in the island governed by Britain, because, said the judge, the islanders believed they had not received the income and other benefits due to them from the mining of phosphates on Ocean Island with its population of 500.

Before the matter came before his court, the judge said, the islanders had tried and failed to get their "deep-seated" grievances over their alleged rights heard everywhere, including the United Nations, without success.

"There is no difficulty in appreciating the deep-seated feelings of grievance that they have had."

The Banabans had not lacked tenacity in pursuing their claim. "A feeling of desperation, however exaggerated, may explain, though not justify, some of the excesses in their activities."

"The letter makes grievous threats if the inhabitants do not agree to sell their property to the British Phosphate Commissioners," said the judge.

The threats included destruction of their villages, compulsory acquisition of their land for "any old price" and indiscriminate mining.

"These threats were made by the man, who, though subject to the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office, was the effective governor of the colony."

But the judge—who took his court to Ocean Island during the hearing—overruled earlier claims by the islanders that bones of their ancestors, at rest in the local cemetery, had been extricated in the mining operations to make phosphates and had been exported to Australia, New Zealand and Britain.

He said that he had visited the cemetery on the island and found it completely undisturbed.

Hope to return

The Vice-Chancellor is to continue his judgment today. He is not expected to finish until Friday.

They are also asking Mr Justice MEGARRY to rule that their island home should be replanted with food-bearing trees—following the phosphate mining operations—so that they can return and build up a viable fishing industry.

They also claim additional mining royalties from the British Phosphate Company.

The original 500 Banabans—whose numbers have now increased to around 2,000, were forced to leave their island home when the Japanese invaded during the last war. They now live in Rabi Island, 1,500 miles away.

Costs have so far amounted to about £750,000.



The Rev. Tebuke Rotan in London yesterday for the 223rd day of the record-breaking civil action in the High Court brought by 500 South Seas islanders against the British Government and the British Phosphates Commissioners.

'Shamed the King'

Earlier, the judge, who is the Vice-Chancellor, criticised Sir Arthur Grimble, Resident Commissioner on Ocean Island in 1926—where the phosphate mining started 75 years ago.

The judge said that Sir Arthur, then Mr Grimble, sent a letter to a village in the island saying that the Banabans' refusal to agree to a royalty of 10½ pence (old money) per ton of phosphates had "shamed the Important Chief" (King George V).

Sir Arthur had put to them "points of life or death." He told them that if they signed the agreement they would have life and "shaming of the Important Chief will be forgiven and you will not be punished."

The "points of life" were that royalties and details of the phosphate agreement should be carried out.

"Points of Death" in the letter were that if they did not



sign the land would be compulsorily acquired and there could be no agreement about the area of land to be taken.

It would then be at a low price. Mining would be indiscriminate and their children and grandchildren would have "no land and no money."

A sick man

Commenting on the letter, the judge said that Sir Arthur had spent a long time in the island climate, was a sick man and had been conducting lengthy negotiations with much frustration when he wrote the letter.

"Even so," said the judge, "with every allowance made it is impossible to read the letter without a sense of outrage."

Parson planned rising to get Island Justice continued.

Sunday Times 31/7/77

Court award angers Banabans

THE BANABAN people of the South Pacific are expected to appeal against last week's High Court award of £9,100 compensation for damage caused to their homeland, Ocean Island, through 50 years of phosphate mining, writes **Roy Perrott**.

The islanders' emissary in London, the Rev. Tebuki Rotan, said yesterday: "My people will be puzzled and sadly indignant at this totally inadequate sum. He said they had already ejected an out-of-court offer of nearly £1 million from the British Phosphate Commission.

The islanders already face a bill of £300,000 for the costs of actions over the past four years against both the British Government and the Phosphate Commissioners,—the longest case in British legal history.

In an earlier judgment Sir Robert Megarry, the Vice-Chancellor, had indicated that the Government had a moral duty to the islanders rather than a precise legal one. As a result, the Government offered the islanders £6.5 million as an ex-gratia payment, subject to no further legal action. An appeal against the High Court ruling might put this figure in the negotiating ring again.

The size of the award is bound to raise doubts among the 3,000 Banabans about their plan to reoccupy part of Ocean Island, to which they feel strong ancestral ties. (They now mainly live in Rabi, part of the Fiji group.) Given enough funds, they want to establish a community of 500 on the island to start a fishing industry.

They say that they need substantial compensation money to replant the island to give means of subsistence.

Fiji Times 9/9/76.

Letters to the EDITOR

Fiji or Ratu Julian Toganivalu, a high chief of Fiji, to whom we have often turned for advice and who have given it generously.

The same administration persists in calling us their "kinsmen." Perhaps it thinks that if it says this often enough people will start to believe it.

We would not mind if the Gilbertese were to refer to us as "Our Banaban cousins" in the same way as the British refer to their "American cousins," a relationship that is not to be taken too literally. But the kinship that the Gilbertese are so anxious to claim goes no deeper than that.

Intermarriage between Banabans and Gilbertese does not change the racial origin of the participants. A Gilbertese marrying a Banaban remains a Gilbertese just as a Fijian marrying a Tongan remains a Fijian.

The Gilbert Islands statement mentions, rather puzzlingly, that when we

Banabans came to live in Fiji after the war we brought 152 Gilbertese men with us. So what?

They had been with us in Japanese captivity and we had shared many hardships. They asked us to take them to Rabi. That establishes sympathy and friendship. Nothing more.

They remain Gilbertese. They own no land on Rabi, as they would if they were Banabans.

The Gilbertese statement is reported to say that it is questionable whether the Banabans would want to live on Ocean Island after the phosphate mining is finished. There is no question about it: We are going back.

It is no use the Gilbertese administration denying that the Banabans were never consulted about having our homeland annexed by Britain. Such denials cannot change historical fact.

They say that the Banaban claim for independence on the basis of former separate identity "is one that each of the 16 other Gilbert Islands could make." We doubt it.

The 16 atolls of the Gilbert group were known to their people as Tungaru long before

the British came and renamed them the Gilberts.

That acceptance of a common name (the name to which they will revert after independence) implies acknowledgement by all Tungaruans that they were one race, although they made war on each other.

Ocean Island, or Banaba, was never known as part of Tungaru. We were separate then. We are still separate in spite of our inclusion in the Gilberts for British administrative convenience.

To reply, point by point, to all the flaws in the Gilbertese statement would take too much of your space but I do invite its authors to be more specific when they say that those who feel convinced by our case would do well to call for an account from the Banaban Funds Trust Board of the management of their funds and their relations with official and other advisers. What are they implying?

Is their case so weak that they must fall back on innuendo to try to discredit our leaders and our advisers? — THOMAS TEAL, secretary, Rabi Council of Leaders.

Reply to Gilberts

Sir — So the Gilbert Islands administration believes that we Banabans deserve better advice from people better acquainted with the Pacific? (Fiji Times, September 8).

We appreciate its concern. But we are quite satisfied that nobody knows the Pacific better than the Prime Minister of

Courtesy Times

16.7.76

WORLD NEWS

GILBERT ISLANDS

Britain agrees to give self-government

LONDON, Thursday (AAP-Reuter). — Britain agreed yesterday to grant internal self-government to its tiny South Pacific colony of the Gilbert Islands next November as a prelude to complete independence, conference sources said.

The decision was taken at constitutional negotiations in London between the Government and a delegation from the 16 islands with an estimated population of 54,000, led by the Chief Minister, Mr Ratieta.

It was also decided that subject to parliamentary approval the colony, which has been under British control for about 100 years, could become an independent State in 1978.

Under the present Constitution the colony, which includes phosphate-rich Ocean Island, has local ministers but the Governor, Mr John Smith, has responsibility for external affairs, defence, internal security and the Public Ser-

vice, and also presides over the Council of Ministers.

The original inhabitants of Ocean Island, the Banabans, are demanding the separation of their former homeland from the Gilberts so that it can become a separate State associated with Fiji.

They complain that when Britain annexed Ocean Island more than 70 years ago it was joined to the Gilberts against their wishes.

Fiji Times Sat 2/18

Thousands expected for march

About 7000 people are expected to participate in a protest march in support of the Banaban cause and hand in a petition to the Commissioner Western, Mr Narsi Raniga, at Lautoka today.

The organiser of the protest march, Cr Luke Vakayadra, of Ba told the Fiji Times that Mr Raniga would present the petition on their behalf to the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who has been acting as an intermediary in the Ocean Island row.

Cr Vakayadra said it was too early to disclose the details of the petition yesterday.

They had presented a petition to the British High Commissioner in Fiji, Mr Stanley Arthur.

Cr Vakayadra said they had formed a committee called the Western Committee for the Banabans with the Tui Vuda, Ratu Senator Josaiia Tavaiqia as its chairman.

"We expect between 5000-7000 people from Rakiraki to Sigatoka to take part in the protest march," he said.

Banabans dispute

Banaban leaders yesterday disputed a statement by the Governor of the Gilbert Islands Colony that they have no particular role to play in talks on self-government for the colony.

Mr Thomas Teai, secretary to the Rabi Council of Leaders, challenged the Governor, Mr John Smith, to clarify his claim — reported in the Fiji Times yesterday — that the Banaban issue was quite separate from matters dealt with in London talks on constitutional aspects of internal self-government for the colony.

NOT BOUND

Referring to the Governor's reported statement that internal self-government for the Gilberts would not change guarantees that the British Government had given the Banabans, Mr Teai said: "The Chief Minister of

'no role'
Fiji Times Sept. 1.
view

the Gilberts has disclosed that once the colony becomes independent its Government will not feel bound by any guarantees given by Britain.

"Mr Smith says Ocean Island has been linked with the Gilberts for a long time.

"It has, in fact, been linked with the Gilberts simply because such a link suited Britain — and that association has not been as lengthy as the link between the Gilberts and the Ellice islands.

"Yet the Ellice people were allowed to break away and become independent as Tuvalu."

Fiji Times SEPT. 8th

BANABANS

THE Gilbert Islands Government has accused the Banabans of making misleading statements about their claim for Ocean Island's independence and says they deserve better advice than they are getting from official and other advisers.

The Gilbertese position on Ocean Island is set out in a long statement entitled: Ocean Island — some facts the Banabans ignore.

The Banabans have had an "emotionally attractive" case presented on their behalf, the statement says.

It goes on: "Those who feel convinced by it would do well to call for an account from the Banaban Funds Trust Board of the management of their funds, and their relations with official and other advisers."

"We have sympathy for their treatment in the past and for the difficulties which as an immigrant group they face."

Kinsmen

"We wish them well, but we believe that our kinsmen deserve better advice from those better acquainted with the people of the Pacific, and better leadership."

The statement is the latest round in the argument over the Banaban demand that their homeland, Ocean Island, should be created as an independent state instead of becoming a permanent part of the shortly to be self-gover-

Gilbert Islands Government puts its case

ning, and in 1978 independent — Gilbert Islands.

It says the Banaban claim for independence on the basis of former separate identity is one that each of the 16 other Gilbert Islands could make.

It denies the Banaban claim that they were never consulted about having their island annexed by Britain.

Politically

Ocean Island had politically been part of the Gilberts for 75 years and for a time had been the capital.

When the Banabans had been resettled at Rabi in Fiji in 1947, 152 of the 337 men had come from other Gilbert Islands, apart from Banaba.

Even today more than 250 of the 2000 people at Rabi had both parents born in the Gilberts other than Banaba.

"It is indeed doubtful whether there is a single Banaban family which does not have relatives in the other Gilbert Islands," the statement says.

It claims: "There is a geographical unity within the

Gilbert Islands, including Banaba, which is greater than found anywhere else in the Pacific."

Other Gilbertese groups were living in Fiji, the Solomons, New Hebrides and US Trust Territory, but none were claiming independence for their former home islands.

The statement says it is questionable whether the Banabans would want to live on Ocean Island after phosphate mining ended there.

Their ownership of the island was not challenged and they always be welcome there.

Ignored

"They do not need sovereignty in order to re-settle or rehabilitate their island," it says.

Noting that the Banabans wanted to go their own way, as the Ellice Islanders had, the statement says they ignored a difference in kind.

Ellice Islanders were a different race, spoke a different language and their islands were geographically remote from the Gilberts.

The Banabans had

"misrepresented the facts" in observing that the Ellice people had not claimed any of Ocean Island's phosphate revenue, because the Ellice had acknowledged that it did not belong to them.

The statement says the Banabans knew perfectly well that they would be asked to take part in the final conference on independence for the Gilbert when the time come.

"But they can hardly expect, as citizens of Fiji, to participate in the day to day administration of the Gilbert Islands, although there has never been anything to prevent the Banabans living on Ocean Island nominating a candidate in national elections to the House of Assembly."

The Gilbert Islands Government had made a 15-point offer to the Banabans regarding their constitutional position, but Tebuke Rotan, the Banaban spokesman, had refused to discuss it.

Refused

"The Banabans ask what trust can they have in a constitution," the statement says.

"There is no instance of the Gilbert Islands Government failing to honour the provisions of the constitution."

But in recognition of the sensitivity of the Banabans, the Chief Minister included in his offer, rejected without discussion, a proposal that Britain and Fiji should be asked to guarantee any agreement between the Gilberts and the Banabans, and that the United Nations be asked to supervise the agreement's provisions.

Letters to the EDITOR

Fiji Times 14th Sept 1976

Return of Banabans

Sir - It is indeed surprising to find that the Banabans have the intention of resettling their homeland according to Mr. Teai in his recent letter.

If Mr Teai is serious he should begin advising his councillors and people to make plans for a homeward journey instead of wasting everybody's time bellowing in a country of which he would not like to continue being a citizen.

What cannot be tolerated is the fact that for too long the Banabans have been publicising their motherland (Banaba) as a place where they shall live and die when in reality they have demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that they would rather remain on Rabi.

Looking back to the time Fiji was making plans for her independence, one recalls that the Banabans were allowed to choose between going back or to becoming Fiji citizens.

For obvious reasons, including that of Fiji being naturally more fertile than the rocky, waterless Banaba, they chose NOT to go home.

Last year, small groups of old and young from Rabi went to see their homeland but without any intention to settle.

What a way of showing the so-called undying love for the homeland! Now Mr Teai is saying they will go home.

Is it from the heart or is it political propaganda?

The love of money has been the driving motive. In fact, the ultimate goal haunting them to act at all costs even if they have to go to the extent of not only rejecting their culture but also putting the Gilbertese people and Government at pain.

Claims of cultural difference, national identity, self-determination and overall political independence have been used as the means towards this goal.

What they have not realised is the fact that they are citizens of a country whose laws do not provide for landowners to claim a mining royalty.

The Gilbertese colonial government has been more than generous by using a Mining Ordinance which provides for 50 per cent of the phosphate royalty (which she could have totally retained for her 50,000 people) to go untaxed to the 2500 Banabans on Rabi with the hope that they, as a migrant group, they use it to develop and maintain a good standard of life.

Are they?
Are the Banaban leaders attempting to repeat the Bougainville story? Perhaps they would achieve more than

their Bougainville counterparts considering the fact that they have the financial power.

What must also be borne in mind is the possibility of the Gilbertese Government adopting a mining ordinance similar to that of Fiji Papua New Guinea and Australia.

But I know for sure that the Gilbertese Government would always maintain a high level of love, generosity and tolerance towards those whom it considers brothers.

Is Mr Teai not clear that his grandmother came from the Gilberts, his lands are still awaiting him at Arorae (the most southerly island of the Gilberts) and that according to a Banaban, custom one must inherit the identity and birthrights of the mother.

Furthermore, as a descendant of a Gilbertese woman, he should be more versed with the legendary and historical background of the Gilbertese (formerly Tungaruans) people than what he has so far demonstrated.

Is he not aware of the fact that his grandmother's people had through the course of pre-European era, peacefully or otherwise, inhabited, settled, dominated or conquered the widely scattered neighbouring islands, including Banaba (200 miles west of Tarawa), the Line and the Phoenix Islands (2000 miles east) to the extent that the people of this wide region (enclosing Banaba, the Gilberts, the line and the Phoenix

group), now administered by one Government, speak one common language which is referred to as Gilbertese?

The British colonisers as early as 1910 had recognised this fact and therefore put the whole region under one colonial government.

The Ellice (now Tuvalu) was consciously incorporated into the same colony purely for administrative rather than for cultural convenience as evidenced by the absence of any political fuss or confrontation when the Ellicians wanted the separation.

Although Mr Teai doubts, I must stress the point that if Banaba can separate on a cultural geographical basis, then the Line or the Phoenix could do it more easily.

And what then would eventually become of the 50,000 population if it were to start disintegrating itself into

multiple nations?
Who would deny that the Rabi Holdings has been making no overall profits from the time it began operation?

It is stated that the company appears expanding because of the million dollars in subsidies derived from the peoples share of the phosphate royalty.

Few are flourishing while many have to be kept alive spiritually with the promise of a good harvest after a period's toil and labour.

Where is the leadership that I, as a lover and brother of many Banabans, can trust to keep my Banaban friends a happy and prosperous people?

If the Banaban leaders feel that they are ready for independence then they must demonstrate two things: Their qualities and declining dependence on foreign advisers. -
TEBURORO TITO, USP, Suva
LEBSITO, U.S.P., Suva.

Fiji Times 23/12/76

What a duck-tail!

BRITAIN ACCUSED OVER GILBERTS DISPUTE

The Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, said yesterday he was astounded to hear that the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office had apparently told the Gilbert Islands he was responsible for the postponement of their independence.

"I was surprised to see a Government could do this sort of thing instead of owning up that they are the ones who still have the authority to make decisions — not the Prime Minister of Fiji," he said.

The Gilbert Islands passed a resolution in its House of Assembly condemning intervention in its affairs by Fiji and claiming interference by Ratu Sir Kamisese was the sole reason for a three-month delay in introducing self-government.

Ratu Sir Kamisese said he had given the Rabi people advice from time to time on request.

At a meeting he chaired in Tarawa between ministers from

the Gilbert Islands and the Rabi Council, they decided to have a meeting with the British Phosphate Commissioners on finance and another in Suva with United Kingdom representatives on the constitutional issue.

"I think the Rabi people and myself thought that here was a way ahead, a breakthrough at last," he said.

The next thing anyone knew, Gilbertese representatives had gone to London for a constitutional conference and decided there should be internal self-government by November.

They did not even have the courtesy to inform the Rabi people and Fiji that they had apparently decided to ignore the agreement and carry on in their own way, Ratu Sir Kamisese said.

When he had the opportunity in London he went to

the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and gave them "a piece of my mind," he said.

The result was that they agreed perhaps they should postpone the date for self-government until they heard the Rabi court case ruling.

Ratu Sir Kamisese said he made the representation on behalf of the Rabi people because they had already asked for help and he had received petitions from public demonstrations held in Suva. *Publish*

There was an understanding

with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office that his talks was confidential and next day the Rabi Council representative and legal adviser would visit the office to talk along the same lines and make the decision on the postponement.

"I was astounded to hear that apparently the information came from the FCO to the Gilberts that I was responsible for the postponement," he said.

"They may not be wrong but officially the ones who really made the decision were the Rabi Council."

And so I was advised by UKFC in London!

Fiji Times 14th September

Letters to the EDITOR

Facts wrong

Sir — Mr Teburoro Tito has plunged into print again — and again he has done it without knowing what he is writing about (Fiji Times September 14).

His teacher should tell him: "Before you leave the classroom write out 100 times

'I must do my homework; I must get my facts right'".

I can assure Mr Teburoro I know I can own land on Arorae through my grandmother, just as I know he does not own nor can he own land on Ocean Island from either his maternal or paternal lineage.

As for Mr Otiuea Tanentoa's denial that his Chief Minister made the statement attributed to him by my colleagues and I, we stand by our letter to you.
— T. TEAI, Secretary, Rabi Council of Leaders.

22/12/76

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Gilbertese ignore the facts

THE suggestion that the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, has been interfering in the domestic affairs of the Gilbert Islands would have been absurd and laughable but for the fact that such a grave accusation has come from none other than that country's Chief Minister, Mr Tuboua Ratieta.

By influencing his House of Assembly to adopt a resolution condemning "intervention" by Fiji in its affairs, Mr Ratieta has probably done serious harm to relations between his Lilliputian state and Fiji.

For some curious reason of his own, Mr Ratieta has chosen to ignore the facts of the issue.

It is common knowledge that Ratu Sir Kamisese was prevailed upon to act as a mediator and conciliator in the dispute between the Banabans and the Gilbertese, at the invitation of both parties.

Throughout his actions, the Prime Minister played the role of a peacemaker in the most statesmanlike manner. Indeed, at one point he was mildly critical of the Banabans themselves for the way in which they campaigned for support for their cause.

To suggest that the Prime Minister has influenced Britain to delay independence for the Gilberts is, to say the least, mischievous. As the leaders of Rabi Island Council have pointed out, the decision was made solely by the British.

In any case, it would be insulting the intelligence of the British to believe that they cannot make their own decisions.

The people of Fiji demonstrated wide support for the Banaban cause. They wanted the British to hear the Banabans' views on the future of their former home.

The Prime Minister had the full support of both the Banabans and the people of Fiji in his attempts to mediate and conciliate in the long-standing dispute between the uprooted islanders and the Gilbertese.

It is a pity that Mr Ratieta and his fellow parliamentarians have chosen to misconstrue his actions and take an inimical posture towards Fiji.

Excerpts from the Fiji Times
of Thursday, 15th July,
1976.

(I am told, though I cannot vouch for
it that a number of Fijians were paid
or enticed by food, to come and swell
the crowd).

Faded handwritten signature

THOUSANDS BACK BANABANS



ABOVE: Banaban leaders leave the British High Commission offices in Suva after presenting their petition yesterday. BELOW: Supporters get their message across.

THE MEEK



● FROM P1

cident by large numbers of police, was to underline the Banaban demand for the separation of Ocean Island, their homeland, from the Gilberts as an independent state.

The petition given to Mr Arthur complained that the Banabans knew nothing about a legal order which would make their island a "mere district" of the self-governing Gilberts.

PROTEST

The Gilberts had never ruled the island and Britain's motive was to avoid her own direct financial responsibilities to the Gilbertese by giving them control of its phosphate wealth, the petition claimed.

Delegation from 13 Fijian provinces, the Fiji National Youth Council, ex-servicemen and the Methodist Church joined the protest procession.

MINISTERS

Two Fiji Government Ministers, the Minister for Fijian Affairs, Ratu William Toganivalu, and the Minister for Agriculture, Ratu Josua Toganivalu, were among people seated on a speaking platform outside the Civic Centre.

Declaring support for the Banaban cause one speaker, the Mayor of Suva, Cr Len Usher, expressed amazement that they were being excluded from the London talks.

Other expressions of support for the Banabans came from the president of the National Federation Party, Mrs Irene Jai Narayan, and the leader of the Fijian Nationalist Party, Mr Sakiasi Butadroka.

*many many...
shortcuts!*

Tebuke Rotan's homeland was devastated by Britain's greed for phosphate. For five years he has carried on his people's struggle for compensation. Christopher Sweeney reports

Half a world away from trust

FOR FIVE lonely years, Tebuke Rotan has fought an extraordinary battle with the British Government from a cheap hotel in central London, waiting to see officials, waiting for the Foreign Office, waiting for court judgments. Half the world away, in the Pacific, the 3,100 Banabans, the former inhabitants of Ocean Island, wait in turn for their monthly letter from Tebuke, listing the latest setbacks, delays and sometimes minor triumphs.

It is now exactly 50 years since the Banabans first protested to the House of Commons, in a pathetic appeal for help, that was predictably ignored. That failure led in turn to a long and hopeless campaign by Tebuke Rotan's father, Tito. He spent years in and out of London, petitioning the Foreign Office and the Government, spending the nights alone in his room watching television he could not understand.

'Any negotiations over a settlement are likely to be long and angry'

In 1972, Tebuke Rotan, a Methodist minister educated in Fiji and Brisbane, Australia, took over from his ailing father to begin the slow round of talks, appeals and petitions. It took him six months on his arrival merely to arrange a meeting, through the unsympathetic hierarchy of the Foreign Office, with the junior minister. He had no lawyer and did not know how to find one, no place to live, no friends or supporters.

"If I did not have my religion to fall back on I would have gone mad. We Banabans are not accustomed to life in big cities, we do not like it.

All the time I would be trying to work out why the British were behaving so badly, why nothing was ever done." Tebuke, now a portly 46, recalled.

"Our families are so important to us, but in the past five years the longest I have spent with them is six weeks at one time. It has been very lonely, very difficult."

In the Pacific island community, cut off from the outside world for endless generations, family life and traditions assume an overwhelming importance. In recognition of his sacrifice, the Banabans now exiled from their homeland to the Fijian island of Rabi, chip in to pay for the fare for his wife to visit him in London every year or two.

After so many years, the Banabans' campaign now seems fairly certain of limited victory. The Foreign Office has indicated that a multi-million trust fund may be established but there is bound to be further dispute over the amount paid and the future distribution.

The sums involved are high — the Crown obtained over £60 million and probably far more from the millions of tons of phosphate extracted from Ocean Island, a tiny pimple in the Pacific, of just 1,500 acres, off the coast of New Guinea.

There is great bitterness towards the British and they clearly do not trust the Government — a wise precaution in view of the past record of deceit and exploitation. Thus any negotiations over a settlement are likely to be long and angry.

Tebuke Rotan took over as the Banabans' emissary after working as a Methodist minister on Rabi Island. The Banabans were in effect exiled there by the British after having been scattered and cruelly used by the Japanese during the Second World War as slave labourers.

He was educated in Fiji and at what sounds like a



Tebuke Rotan: "We trusted the British"

remarkably cheerful theological college in Australia. "They were such good days, the best in my life. We had so much fun, naturally I failed," he recalls. After later graduating he worked within the community, married ("I had the longest engagement in our history — 7 years") and had six children. He is intensely proud of the community, meticulously listed the number of Banaban children who had passed high school certificates, recalling other triumphs in their life with the host Fijians.

Part of the problem in the long dispute has arisen from

the vast differences in cultures and ways of thinking. In the four Banaban villages on Rabi, possessions are shared, life is gentle and disputes are rare. Like other Pacific islanders, they are great drinkers but meanness and violence are alien — in tight communities, conflicts are avoided by every means.

In diplomatic terms, however, Tebuke readily admits they have been naïve, extraordinarily so to an outsider. Unwittingly they gave up land for the equivalent of trinkets, because of trickery and their own wide-eyed naïveté. "We did not know what the true position

was in those days. We trusted the British and believed what they told us," Tebuke said.

The Banabans were also hopelessly naïve about the campaign itself, trusting that the courts would arbitrate (even where, as it turns out, they did not have the power). Over the years their leaders have aided the British side, unwittingly signing away rights and conceding vital points without realising their significance.

Last year they admitted that there had been mismanagement in their previous financial affairs — money was distributed among the community, sometimes unwisely. They acknowledged this to the Foreign Office without realising that this admission would be used against them in arguments over the form of trust and the amount of Banaban control over the compensation payment.

The complexities of the dispute, involving the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and the future status of the Gilbert and Ellice Island colony, as well as Britain, in any case were difficult enough to baffle the most experienced negotiator. "We are not used to these ways of thinking," Tebuke Rotan explained. "It is so difficult, governments have behaved badly. They will not admit their fault even when they are wrong."

MPs and others advising the Banabans also claim that there is a cabal within the Foreign Office, determined to side with the Gilbert Islanders, who have received 85 per cent of the Ocean Island phosphate royalties, since the Banabans homeland has always been regarded, by Britain, as part of the Gilbert colony. "They have an Ibo mentality, the same people led the Government astray over the Nigerian civil war. They will not concede at all," one adviser snapped.

The impetus for the latest round of dispute came when

Nauru, 170 miles from Ocean Island, gained independence from Australian control in 1968 and set about exploiting its own phosphate deposits. Advised by the high powered investment consultants, Philip Schrapnel and Co in Sydney, the 4,000 Nauruans turned their 8.5 square mile island into perhaps the richest single country in the world. Royalties from phosphate now give them, according to UN figures, the highest per capita income in the world — in 1975, over £15,000 a year.

'There is now less than two years worth of phosphate left'

The sudden Nauruan affluence showed just how wealthy the Banabans could have been had they been given proper advice and control of their own resources. World phosphate prices quadrupled in 1974-5 when Morocco, with the world's largest supply, cut back on supplies. But the Banabans were still largely tied to contracts negotiated more than two decades before, contracts that were undoubtedly forced on them against their best interests by the British.

There is now less than two years' worth of phosphate left on the devastated island. The High Court last year acknowledged that the island itself is now probably damaged beyond repair. Once the phosphate goes the Banabans fear they will have nothing left, not even adequate recompense for the prosperity they brought to farmers in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.

"We have been made to look foolish," Tebuke Rotan acknowledges. "But at first we did not understand."

THE DISAPPOINTMENTS OF THE BANABANS

The unfortunate Banabans have had another setback. To their disappointment at the attitude of the British Government towards their financial claims and their desire for independence from the Gilbert Islands has now been added a feeling of disillusion with British justice, following Sir Robert Megarry's judgment last week that they were entitled to less than £50 an acre—a total of less than £10,000—as damages for the breach of the British Phosphate Commissioners' obligation to replant trees and shrubs on Ocean Island, the Banabans' original homeland, now utterly devastated by the detritus of phosphate mining. The Banabans' distress is all the stronger for their having two years ago refused an offer of nearly £500,000 and, earlier this year, one of about £1m.

The judge's award appears to be parsimonious. It does not require any deep knowledge of arboriculture to appreciate that very little can be done for £50 an acre when the terrain in question has been described as resembling a lunar landscape. It was not an award realistically designed to allow the Banabans effectively to replant the island

to the extent that it could become capable of sustaining a reasonable subsistence agricultural economy, which is what they wanted. Their claim, however, for nearly £50,000 an acre, to include the filling in of all the craters by the importation of huge quantities of soil, was equally unrealistic in the other direction.

The Banabans are now considering an appeal, which would mean that many of the issues raised in what has already been one of England's longest lasting cases—more than 220 working days—would have to be repeated before another court. The appeal would not be as long as the hearing before the High Court, but it would inevitably be very lengthy and very costly. It would be to the benefit of all the parties to avoid continuing the litigation. The British Government in concert with the governments of Australia and New Zealand has made an offer of £6.5m as an *ex gratia* payment to the Banabans to compensate them for the exploitation of Ocean Island and the moral—though not legal—wrongs done to them in the past. But that offer is conditional on there being no further litigation and

would therefore no longer be on the table if an appeal were to be lodged. The Banabans have also been told that the door is open for negotiations about their future status. Those talks, too, would be prejudiced by an appeal against Sir Robert Megarry's decision.

The Banabans are not happy about the amount of £6.5m offered them, and it would not be offensive if the Government were to increase that offer. On the separate issue of the British Phosphate Commissioners' liability for their failure to replant Ocean Island, it would be better all round if the Commissioners were not to treat Sir Robert Megarry's award as the limit of their obligation to the Banabans. They should be generous in victory, and resume negotiations with the islanders on the basis of the kind of sums they had previously offered, around £1m. The Commissioners may have the law on their side in sticking strictly to the court's decision, but few would deny that the luckless Banabans have a great deal of moral justice on theirs. They should be treated generously and not forced to retreat to their Pacific home in bitterness and disillusionment.

London Times 4/8/77

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Balance and the Banaban cause

16/2

Sir.—It is always good to see the Guardian backing those who have had a raw deal, but this backing should be fair and balanced, and factual. In this case the Guardian seems to have fallen below its usual standard, tending to report only the Banabans' views, as put by Tebuke Rotan (February 12) and earlier, and failing to put the other side—or even to check on the "facts" given.

To say "the Banabans were in effect exiled" to Rabi Island by the British is an emotive travesty of the truth. The Banabans themselves requested Britain in 1940 to find them a new home in the Fiji Islands and after their deportation by the Japanese they agreed to go to Rabi Island for two years. If after that time they wished to return to Ocean Island the British Government would bear the cost but in fact by an overwhelming majority in a secret ballot (with Banaban supervisors) they decided to stay on in Rabi Island, where the Fiji Government have made special arrangements for them to continue their

normal mode of life and customs.

The statement "the Banabans homeland has always been regarded, by Britain, as part of the Gilbert Colony" is true. But it isn't only Britain that has so regarded it. Missionary and Church sources confirm that the Banabans of Ocean Island and the Gilbertians are one people, with one language and tradition, and much intermarriage, so that it was not just a commercial trick to include Ocean Island within the boundaries of the Gilbert Islands Colony. Missionaries, both serving in and retired from the Gilbert Islands, are very anxious that the Banaban issue should not be treated separately from the Gilbert Islands as they all say without any hesitation that the Banabans are Gilbertese, and all will suffer when phosphates on Ocean Island are exhausted.

Two major Gilbertese Churches, Roman Catholic and the Gilbert Islands Protestant Church, only last November wrote in a joint letter to the Pacific Conference of

Churches: "... We believe that an excess of zeal in the presentation of causes that may well be just, against others, is leading to a situation where injustice may be done to the Gilbertese. . . . We therefore appeal to the Banabans to strip off exaggeration, and indeed misleading and false propaganda. Let us talk together . . . with a view to helping our peoples to reach a peaceful settlement for co-operation."

The original BBC TV documentary "Go tell it to the judge" was imbalanced, concentrating on the grievances of the Banabans and giving little opportunity for other points of view to be exposed. No-one disputes that the Banabans have had a raw deal, and that proper compensation is due, and due promptly now that the judgement in the recent court case has been given. But the deal is not quite as raw as the film suggested and it would be wrong to put one injustice right by creating others.

Not only the U.K., but Australia, New Zealand and Fiji

are involved. Mr. Posnett, for the Foreign Office, is now on his way to discuss the matter with these parties but it is important that as soon as he returns there is no delay in making a prompt and generous settlement for all concerned.—Yours sincerely,
H. E. Hiley.

Wonersh
Guildford, Surrey

Sir.—I have been following with interest your treatment of the injustices suffered by the Banaban people. I was particularly impressed by Christopher Sweeney's brilliant article on the Rev. Tebuke Rotan, the Banaban leader. What an enchanting and wonderful people they seem to be—always turning the other cheek.

May I express the wish that the Banabans, without losing their delightful characteristics, will stand up and fight the British Government for their rights.

Charles Pritchard.

Hawkins House,
Dolphin Square,
London SW 1.



JAMES CAMERON

British and not proud of it

The Standard
17.1.177

I CANNOT RECALL any television programme which in any way involved me that produced anything like the extraordinary public impact of the documentary made by Jenny Barraclough called *Go Tell it to the Judge*, shown on BBC the other day. For some reason — well, obvious reason — this hit viewers on the raw more keenly, and more immediately, than anything else in my own experience.

I am knee-deep in mail; Jenny Barraclough, whose sole concept it was, must be not a nut-case in the lot, so far. On the contrary, letters from Leamington, missives from Malvern, cheques from Cheltenham. And all of them saying, in a startling concision of phrase: I had never believed it possible that I could be ashamed of being British. I had always trusted in British justice. I am aghast to learn for the first time of

the cruelties being done in my name. I am a loyal, middle-aged colonel, retired, and I am dishonoured. What can we do now?

The show that stirred up all this furore was, of course, an account of the British colonial and commercial record in Ocean Island, a minute speck of what used to be idyllic habitable land in the Pacific, which is now a wasteland, whose inhabitants have been wantonly and wickedly deported into exile and poverty, in the name of big business, supported and sponsored by HM Government — which is to say, in your name, and mine.

Now it goes without saying that the programme was couched in my customary temperate and measured terms, straying no way from total objectivity. But total objectivity was quite enough to make it very clear indeed that for years HMG, and its mining interests have tricked, deceived, threatened, conned, and mocked these peaceful Pacific simpletons with an aversion so naked it shocked even the judge. Not that it

did the islanders much good, shocking the judge. Maybe, now, shocking the people may help.

It is far from a new story; indeed it culminated not long ago in the longest and costliest civil action ever heard in London. Still, from the rumpus caused by the documentary, it seemed that great numbers of decent Englishmen were startled to realise that officers of the Crown on the other side of the world were operating like a colonial Mafia. And after all this time, have still not been brought to book. Not, by all the indications, ever will be.

It is a hard tale to synthesise, as it has been going on a long time. At the start of the century a smart New Zealand businessman stumbled on the fact that this Ocean Island, which is only 34 kilometres across, was practically solid phosphate — guano, from centuries of bird-droppings, an immensely valuable fertiliser. Albert Ellis, as he was called, moved in like a shot.

The Ocean Islanders were called Banabans. They were affectionate, welcoming, and illiterate. On the first day Ellis conned them into surrendering the mining rights for 999 years, for £50 a year. It was too good to be true, at least for Mr Ellis. However, to consolidate the bonanza, the British Government was persuaded, without difficulty, to *annex* Ocean Island into the Empire. In 1901 the baffled Banabans found themselves a colony, and the Colonial Office a conspirator.

Over the years the skulduggery went on. Every so often the Banabans had to put their marks to legal documents they had no earthly means of understanding. The company's bulldozers tore the land away and shipped it to Australia. They destroyed the coconut trees, the main source of the Banabans' food. They promised to restore the ravaged soil; they never did. Ocean Island began to disappear.

In 1920 the Governments of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand bought up the phosphate company. The Colonial Office was now a prime party in this rapacious and squalid swindle. When the Banabans protested at anything now they could be, and were, officially threatened with punishment.

The Banabans pleaded for, and offered to pay for, legal advice in these mysterious negotiations. They were *allowed no legal advice*.

There is much to be said for cutting this squalid story short, though it gets worse as it goes on. Finally the Banabans' two spokesmen and father-figures, Rotan Tito and his son Tebuke, came to seek help in the place where they knew justice was infallible: London. They had never been anywhere before, they knew nobody and nothing. Yet somehow or other their two prodigious cases came to court — and lasted 221 days, used seven million spoken words, and cost £1 million.

Judge Megarry took four months to write an enormous judgment that said almost nothing. In the first case: yes, the phosphate people had reneged on their promise to replant the land, and the Banabans should get damages — but how much, he couldn't bring himself to say. Something neither too small nor too big: let them work it out. In the case against the British Government: the Banabans had no case at all.

Yet with an extraordinary rider: "The question is not whether the Banabans should succeed in fairness, or ethics. I cannot make an award just because I conclude they have had a raw deal. Yet a judge must direct attention to a wrong he cannot right. I leave it to the Crown to do what it considers proper."

Thus one of the most equivocal judicial statements on record. They won, but they lost; they were right, but they were wrong.

Tebuke Tito accepted this for the Banabans with an almost super-human generosity and consideration. "They are good men I am sure," he said, "but I think I shall never understand the law. They mean well, but now we have nothing left, not even our home."

The Crown is the fountain-head of a justice that, they say, must manifestly be seen to be done. Thus must be reflecting Philip Agee, facing the Home Office committee that proposes to deport him and won't say why. Said Sir Derek Hilton, the chairman: "It is decided this is the system. Take it or leave it."

Thus the two fugitive Indian monks Ram Roy and Nandedeswar Prasad, to be sent back to Nepal without a hearing. Says Mr Melvyn Rees, doubtless an authority on the Ananda Marga movement: "You can't go letting people in just because they are monks."

Thus Rotan and Tebuke Tito of Ocean Island, who went and told it to the judge, and were told in return: You are entitled to damages but I don't know what. You have had a raw deal from the Government, but judges aren't in business for raw deals. Go thou and sin no more.

And if possible, fellows, be British. It clearly helps.

Britain's envoy to Ocean Is in Fiji for talks with Govt heads



A British Government official who is investigating the future status of Ocean Island arrived in Suva yesterday with a souvenir from it that he will carry on his forehead for some time.

Mr Richard Posnett (above) cracked his head on a stalactite exploring one of the huge underground caverns used by the island as water reservoirs.

Nursing a scar above his left eye, he said in Suva yesterday: "There was blood all over the place."

He spent three days travelling by ship from Tarawa in the Gilberts to the island and back.

Mr Posnett was called back from leave after four years as governor of the British central American colony of Belize to investigate the Ocean Island question for Britain.

The island's owners, the Banabans, want it severed from the Gilberts and given independence as an associate state of Fiji.

ENTITLED

The Gilbertese have objected to the idea.

The Banabans also want compensation for damage done to their island by phosphate mining.

After hearing their case, a British judge said recently that they were morally entitled to something.

Mr Posnett told the Fiji Times he had come to the Pacific with "no propositions to make at all."

"I am here to listen, learn and inquire and report back to the minister."

Mr Posnett was despatched to the South Pacific by the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Goronwy-

By ROBERT KEITH-REID

Roberts, and arrived via Hong Kong and Nauru.

He said he went to Nauru to compare it with Ocean Island.

Ocean Island had not been what he had expected.

"I had expected something looking like a desert, rather, but it is quite a green island" he said.

But this might have been because there had been some good rain.

TALKS

Mr Posnett said it was too early for him to judge whether the Banabans could survive on the island after phosphate mining ended.

In the Gilberts he had held private talks with the government and had heard views from the public expressed at a 3½ hour maneaba (public meeting) attended by about 300 people.

"I was given quite a rocky reception," he said.

"There were a lot of placards."

Opinion at this meeting had been against the secession of Ocean Island.

In Fiji, Mr Posnett will meet Government officials to discuss Fiji's attitude to the dispute. He will spend several days at Rabi, where the majority of Banabans live.

At the end of this week, he will leave for Australia and New Zealand for talks with the governments of both countries as members of the commission which mines Ocean Island's phosphate deposits.

According to London reports, Britain wants Australia and New Zealand to contribute to any compensation paid to the Banabans.

HOME NEWS

Banabans to renew fight for pay-out

By CHRISTOPHER SWEENEY

The extraordinary legal battle between the 3,000 Banabans and the British Government may not yet be over, despite the millions of words, years of court action and the High Court case last year which became the longest in English legal history. Preparations are now being made for a possible appeal against judgment last December which gave the former inhabitants of the tiny Western Pacific atoll of Ocean Island a clear moral, but not legal, victory.

If the appeal goes ahead, it will probably be up to another two years before the issue is settled. Under the limited judgment of Sir Robert Megarry, the Vice-Chancellor, on their action for the restoration of their island, the Banabans fear that they will receive a small settlement. Legal advisers have warned them that it could be less than £500,000.

The islanders had originally sued for £21 millions in the action, one of two highly complex cases brought simultaneously against the British Government and the British Phosphate Commissioners. For more than 50 years, the commissioners have controlled the company extracting millions of pounds worth of phosphate from the tiny pimple of an island, roughly halfway between Sydney and San Francisco in the Pacific.

The move would also be aimed at pressuring the Government and the Foreign Office. The Banabans have complained

bitterly that Westminster has been delaying settlement of the issue of compensation. Sir Bernard Braine and Mr John Lee, the two MPs who have been fighting for the Banabans for many years, have also accused the Foreign Office of deliberate delay.

A special emissary, Mr Richard Posnett, a former colonial governor, is currently in the Pacific talking to interested governments on the question. He is due to return to London in March after talks with the Fijian, Australian and New Zealand governments and the leaders of the Banaban and Gilbert Island communities.

Mr John Lee, Labour MP for Birmingham, Handsworth, said: "If the Foreign Office Ministers were really serious they could have merely picked up the phone and talked to the governments in Canberra or Wellington. I suspect that all these moves are just aimed at stringing the dispute along, hoping that the public will forget about it all. They have been talking about this question now for years. Why send another emissary around the Pacific? All the attitudes are known by now."

The Foreign Office, which denies this implication is, however, known to be worried about a possible Appeal Court hearing. The outspoken appeal judges, Lords Denning and Scarman, could well have some extremely harsh and embarrassing words to say about the previous colonial administration.

Letters, page 10

Banabans wait for Australia

By STEPHEN NISBET

CANBERRA. — Australia has still to decide if it will help the Banaban people displaced from the phosphate mining centre of Ocean Island.

A British Government negotiator, Mr. Richard Posnett, said yesterday he had received no firm commitment that Australia would support an aid plan.

Mr. Posnett, a former Governor of the Caribbean State of Belize, is visiting Australia and the South Pacific to sound out opinion on aid to the Banabans, and who should pay for it.

He has talked in the past two days with the Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Peacock, and Government officials.

Yesterday Mr. Posnett said he hoped a settlement could be reached within a very few months, and he was happy with the progress of his mission.

Britain wants Australia and New Zealand to share the cost of moves to assure the economic future of the 2000 Banabans, most of whom now live on the Fijian island of Rabi, 1800 kilometres from Ocean Island.

Aid — if agreed to — could be financed from the surplus of the British Phosphate Commission, owned 42 per cent each by Britain and Australia, and 16 per cent by New Zealand.

The Banabans' compensation claims have come into the spotlight through a marathon series of legal cases before Britain's High Court.

Lesser claim

The Banabans failed in their main action which sought compensation from Britain for allegedly inadequate royalties.

But protracted out-of-court legal negotiations are still going on over a second and lesser Banaban claim against the British Phosphate Commission.

Mr. Posnett said Ocean Island looked more habitable than he had been led to believe.

"It didn't look like a moonscape at all. There was quite a lot of vegetation in the areas where there had been mining," he said.

"We should not dismiss too lightly the Banabans' claim that some of them could live there."

In Canberra, Mr. Posnett will visit Professor Henry Maude, a retired historian who spent many years as a British Colonial Administrator in the Pacific.

Professor Maude was in charge of the British Government's purchase of Rabi Island for the Banabans during the second world war.

Professor Maude said yesterday the Banabans had voted 85 per cent in favor of the move to Rabi Island which was more fertile and 10 times bigger than Ocean Island.



HALF the Banaban Council of Leaders (from left) Area Tekinene, chairman Rotan Tito, Burentau Tabunawati and Kariatabwewa Tabuariki prepare for a meeting with the other five council members today to discuss Britain's offer of \$10 million.

JUST TIMES 31/5/77

Rabi leaders hit out at 'one-sided' propaganda

The Banabans resented constant attempts by Britain to present a one-sided view of the financial benefits from Ocean Island phosphate, Banaban spokesman Thomas Teai said yesterday in Suva.

Banaban leaders flew into Suva yesterday to discuss an offer of \$10 million from Britain, Australia and New Zealand, to settle their Ocean Island claims.

They would issue a statement on the offer as early as possible, Mr Teai said.

He said Britain was "at it again" trying to give a one-sided picture of the Banabans' financial benefits.

"Britain is trying to infer that we are motivated by greed.

"This is a much-used propaganda ploy and one we have become used to rebutting."

The Banabans have received \$7,500,000 in phosphate revenues already paid and will receive another \$10 million before mining ends by about 1980.

If they accept the \$10 million ex-gratia

payment offer, it will make a total of \$27,500,000.

Any payments made by the British Phosphate Commission as compensation for damages would be in addition to this.

"What the British Government did not say was that Britain had taken something like \$90 million from Banaban phosphate to help administer the Gilbert Islands Colony", Mr Teai said.

"British officials arranged matters in such a way that Britain's financial responsibilities towards the Gilberts were discharged at the expense of Ocean Island's single wasting asset rather than at the expense of the British taxpayer."

In other words, the vast majority of the proceeds from the Banabans' single wasting asset was diverted by Britain for the benefit of others, he said.

In addition, Banaban phosphate benefitted Australian and New Zealand farmers to the tune of \$28 million.

"We understand also that Britain has been able to accumulate a reserve fund for the Gilberts of over \$40 million," Mr Teai said.

"All this has come from our phosphate.

"We were bullied and tricked into allowing this benefit to flow in increasing volume to the British Crown at our expense and that of future generations of our people," he said.

The British Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Dr David Owen, said in the House of Commons that Banaban leaders had pressed for independence for Ocean Island and later wanted it to be part of Fiji.

The Gilbert Islands felt strongly that the island should continue to be part of the Gilberts, as it had been for most of this century, he said.

Ocean Island was 240 miles from the Gilberts and 1400 from Fiji.

There were strong legal constitutional and historical objections to making territorial changes, Dr Owen said.

"There can be no perfect solution, but given goodwill there can be an agreed compromise," he said.

But not final decisions would be reached before a preindependence constitution conference for the Gilbert Islands.

The Banabans would be invited to this conference, Dr Owen said.

*A happier 1978 than all
to you than all
their look like
leaving. P. 18
30.12.76. Fiji Times 28.12.76.*

OCEAN IS. FACES EARLY CLOSURE

Revenue that the Banaban people draw from the mining of Ocean Island phosphates will be cut off earlier than forecast because the deposits are smaller than had been estimated.

The Gilbertese Minister of Finance, Mr Roniti Teiwaki, has announced that according to the latest British Phosphate Commission figures, the reserves are about 190,000 tons less than earlier estimated.

He told the Budget meeting of the House of Assembly in Tarawa that mining would be completed about September 1978, six months earlier than forecast, with the last

Phosphate mines run out in 1978

phosphate shipment being sent out in mid 1979.

In financial terms the Gilbertese Government would lose about \$2,300,000 in taxed between 1979 and 1980, and \$5 million to \$6 million in export revenue, he said.

Ocean Island's former inhabitants, the Banabans, draw annual mining royalties from the BPC.

The revision of the amount

of reserves means that their income over the next two years could be tens of thousands of dollars less than expected.

FROZEN

Mr Teiwaki said the "unhappy" news from Ocean Island came at a time when phosphate prices had fallen from a record \$54 a ton in mid 1975 to under \$38 in the second half of this year.

Gilbertese Government re-

venue next year would fall by about 15 per cent to \$11,771,000 compared to the total this year, he said.

He said it would be necessary to make "severe" economies.

Public service recruiting would be frozen until April 1.

Other economic problems, such as low copra prices, had meant that for the first time in over a decade the per capita income had fallen.

Last year it had been \$720. This year it had been \$632.

Next year's estimate was \$626.

"It will continue to fall until such time as we can establish an alternative revenue source to phosphates," he said.

New campaign by Banabans

A fresh international campaign is being launched by the Banaban people to win independence for Ocean Island and to obtain more compensation for the phosphate mined from it.

Appeals will be aimed at the United Nations, the South Pacific Forum and an already largely sympathetic British public.

As a last resort the Banabans may use their support in Britain's House of Commons to block independence for the Gilbert Islands, of which Ocean Island is at present politically part as a British colony.

"Our platform is not changed from that of the previous council," the newly-elected Chairman of the Rabi Council of Leaders, the Reverend Tebaiti Tawaka, said in a message to supporters.

"We want immediate self-determination for Banaba (the Banaban name for Ocean Island), immediate direct payment of the \$10,000,000 offered to us by Britain, and financial assistance for our administration and development."

The Banabans, most of whom live in Fiji have been waging a campaign over Ocean Island, their original home for many years.

They want the island to be separated from the Gilberts which are expected to become independent soon and given its own independence, possibly in association with Fiji.

They want a bigger share of the benefits derived from mining of the island's phosphate deposits by the

British, Australian and New Zealand directed British Phosphate Commission.

The Banabans have been offered a \$10,000,000 lump sum with a suggestion that it should be paid into a trust.

Mr Tawaka and Mr Thomas Teai, secretary of the council, returned to Fiji from Britain recently.

In Britain they had discussions with the Justice for the Banabans committee headed by Sir Bernard Brain MP which has been authorised to act in Britain on the council's behalf.

"Time is running out because of approaching independence for the Gilberts," Mr Tawaka said.

GUARDIAN 25.2
How the Banabans got to Rabi

Sir.—Your correspondent Mr Hiley (February 16) is quite right in saying that “the Banabans have had a raw deal and that proper compensation is due, and due promptly.”

His account of the move of the Banabans to Rabi is less accurate, as the following Government note to the Phosphate Commissioners in 1945 indicates :

“It is considered most desirable that this unique opportunity should be taken for taking them to Rabi instead of returning them to Ocean Island. . . . While present shipping difficulties are realised it is strongly urged that they should not be permitted to frustrate the carrying out of a project which the Commissioners have been striving to achieve for decades and which, if not done now, will never be done.”

(See Hansard of 18.12.1975, col. 1856.)

It cannot be too strongly stressed that the injustice done to these people has been the subject of repeated debates and questions in the House of Commons by members of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Parties, and latterly the SNP. It is no use trying to dismiss the matter by reference to alleged imbalance in the television programme, nor will it do to try to play off the supposed interests of the Gilbertese against the Banaban claims—this is the current Foreign Office tactic, and it is thoroughly disreputable.

Only full and generous recompense to the Banabans and respect for their wishes concerning the future constitutional status of Ocean Island can satisfactorily resolve this long-standing grievance.—Yours sincerely,

Frank Hooley, MP,
(Lab, Sheffield Heeley).
House of Commons,
London SW1.

\$14,105 damages for 'ravaged' Ocean I.

'British justice has been trading over our homeland very cheaply'

LONDON, Sunday (AAP-*Reuter*). — The Banabans, dismayed at being awarded the equivalent of only \$14,105 as compensation for their Pacific island homeland being devastated by phosphate mining, are to appeal against the decision.

The 3,000 islanders had expected to be awarded several million dollars for the cost of replanting 74 hectares of Ocean Island with coconut and breadfruit trees.

But in the London High Court on Friday, the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Robert Megarry, ruled that they should receive compensa-

tion at the rate of about \$A187 a hectare.

He said also that the Banabans should pay legal costs, which their representative in London, the Reverend Tebuke Rotan, estimated yesterday to be about \$A465,000.

"I am very puzzled how this compensation figure has been arrived at", he said.

Ocean Island was so devastated by phosphate mining from about the beginning of the century that after World War II the 3,000 Banabans had to be moved to Rambi Island in the Fiji group.

The British Phosphate Commission (an Australian-British-

New Zealand partnership) offered about \$A1.5 million in an out-of-court settlement a few weeks ago, but Mr Rotan said, "We turned that offer down because we believe the High Court award would be better".

Australia, Britain and New Zealand offered last May an ex-gratia payment of \$A10 million on condition the Banabans made no further claims "arising out of past events".

But in view of the proposed appeal by the Banabans over the High Court decision the offer from the three Governments is now in doubt.

"British justice has been trad-

ing over our homeland very cheaply", Mr Rotan said.

"Seven years ago we were advised to put our faith in the British High Court giving justice to the Banaban people for the destruction of our homeland, Ocean Island. . . .

"Our failure, so far, to obtain the assistance of the British courts will not in any way discourage us from pursuing the goal we are all determined to reach: our return to Ocean Island and its restoration over future years so that a self-governing Banaban community can live there again, as they did before Britain came and destroyed our land for its phosphates".



Mr Rotan

Carlson Times
1.8.77

Banabans discuss \$10m offer from Britain

FIJI TIMES
Monday 30/5/77

Banaban leaders were meeting in Suva late yesterday to consider an offer of \$10 million from Britain, Australia and New Zealand to settle their Ocean Island claims.

A statement is expected from the Rabi Council of Leaders today on the offer, announced in the House of Commons on Friday by the British Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Dr David Owen.

The British Government's offer provoked criticism from Government and Opposition MPs in the House of Commons.

Sir Bernard Braine said the sum offered was only one-fifth of what the Banabans would have earned if they had been given proper advice and information in 1947.

The Banabans want Ocean Island detached from the Gilberts group when they become independent and have been pressing for about \$100 million in compensation and extra royalties for the damage done by phosphate mining operations on Ocean Island.

A statement from the British Government said there were about 2000 Banaban people living in four villages. They had received about \$7,500,000 in phosphate revenues in the past three years and would receive an estimated \$10 million before mining opera-

tions finish in 1979 or 1980.

The phosphate commissioners had to pay about \$27,500,000 in damages, and the \$10 million now offered by the phosphate commissioners, Britain, New Zealand and Australia was in addition to these payments.

Dr Owen said the money would be given on condition that no further claims would be made arising out of past events.

He said the money was not payment for damages, but financial help for the Banabans to secure their economic future when phosphate revenues ceased.

The money would be used to establish a fund for the benefit of the Banaban community as a whole.

WEATHER

Forecast: Isolated showers.
Details Page 10.

On Page 16:

FIJI'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

● Ba top soccer league ladder

ISLANDERS WIN DAMAGES FOR MISSING TREES

By JAMES O'DRISCOLL, High Court Reporter

FIVE HUNDRED South Sea islanders were awarded damages in the High Court yesterday for the failure of the British Phosphates Commissioners to replant part of their land with fruit-bearing trees.

But a £21 million claim against the British Government for under-paid mining royalties was dismissed. There had been grave breaches of Governmental obligation, said the Vice-Chancellor, Sir ROBERT MEGARRY, but the court was powerless.

Sir Robert gave his 250,000-word judgment on day 226 of a record-breaking civil action brought over the island of Banaba.

He also ruled against the claim of the islanders that the British Phosphates Commissioners had mined more of the island land than allowed under contract.

Level not fixed

The judge did not fix the damages yesterday, but left the amount for negotiation between the parties involved in the litigation and for them to come back to court regarding those damages.

During the case Sir Robert, 66, took his court from London on the 25,000-mile round trip to the South Sea island and said that replanting of fruit-bearing trees on one-sixth of its total area which the islanders sought would prove impossible. He awarded them damages instead.

The British Government governed the island when phosphate mining started there. Sir Robert dismissed the claim against the Crown because, he said, its obligation to the Banabans was not financial but governmental.

But he added: "In litigation in which the Attorney General is a party, a judge ought to direct attention to what he considers to be a wrong he cannot right and leave it to the Crown to do what it considers to be proper."

"The Crown was, traditionally the fountain of justice and justice is not confined to what is enforceable in the Courts."

Phosphate deal

The negotiation of a major phosphate deal in 1947 without giving the Banabans guidance or advice "could not possibly be called good government."

The case was brought to the court after a 30-year dispute between the BANABANS and the British Government and the British Phosphates Commissioners.

Banaba, also known as Ocean Island, became a British settlement in 1900 and a colony in 1918.

The Banabans were forced to leave when the Japanese invaded their island during the 1939-45 war. They now live on Rabi Island, 1,500 miles away.

There were no Banabans in court yesterday as Sir Robert finished his judgment, which had taken 4½ days to deliver.

The Rev TEBUKE ROTAN, 46, the Methodist Minister who heads the islanders' Rabi Council of Leaders, said after the case that he was returning to his people weary and defeated.

Long struggle

In a statement issued through his London solicitors he said: "We have failed in law because there is no English law to protect us from the exploitation we had suffered for a long time from the British Government."

"In other words, we have been defeated in our long and expensive struggle to obtain justice for our grievances from the Crown."

The action had not been an expensive mistake because it was the only way open to the islanders after they had tried all ways to obtain grievances.

He added: "It is an effective way of appealing to the conscience of the lawmakers of Great Britain, Members of Parliament, officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who are advisers to the Minister of State in charge of Banaban affairs and the British public for this reason:

"The judge has strongly condemned the British Government's failure to meet its obligations to protect its own subjects who are weak, helpless and too small to protect themselves from such exploitation."

During the hearing Sir Robert set up at least two records. He took his court on the longest journey made by a High Court trial judge and presided over the longest civil action in High Court history.

Fiji Times 12/5/77

FIJI URGES UK: HURRY UP

Banaban question gains urgency

Fiji has asked Britain to help it to avoid spoiling its friendship with the Gilbert Islands, by making a quick decision on the future of Ocean Island.

And it has warned that if the decision is delayed for much longer, the Banabans will believe that there is a deliberate move to postpone matters until the island's phosphate deposits are worked out.

In a statement to the United

Nations Colonialism Committee in New York, Fiji spokesman Mr Aryoday Lal praised British efforts to prepare the Gilbert Islands for independence next year.

But exclusion of the Banabans from talks last year on constitutional advances for the Gilberts "have only served to exacerbate the fears of the

Banabans about their future in Ocean Island," he said.

Fiji appreciated British efforts to hold consultations with the Banabans this year by sending an envoy to Rabi to discuss the Ocean Island question with them.

But the Banabans felt strongly that the island should be separated from the Gilberts

before the Gilbertese got independence.

Fiji already had said it was willing to accept a special constitutional arrangement with Ocean Island if Britain agreed.

British assurances regarding phosphate mining on the island were encouraged, he said.

But it was vital that Britain made a decision on the island's political future as quickly as possible.

"We are keen to avoid a situation which would mar our relations with our Gilbertese friends," Mr Lal said.

2
GUARDIAN 23.2
Banaban links with the Gilberts

Sir — The facts do not support Mr Hiley's implication (Letters February 16) that Ocean Island was always part of the Gilberts.

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands, originally taken under protection in 1892, were annexed as a Colony by an Order in Council of 1915. A schedule to this order lists the islands with which it deals. Ocean Island was not amongst them. A further Order, under the Colonial Boundaries Act of 1895, extended the boundaries of the colony to include Ocean Island in January 1916. If this was not a commercial trick, it was certainly an imperial stratagem aimed at ensuring that Banaban phosphates would defray the cost of administering the Gilbert and Ellice Group. The Banabans were not consulted and, of course, knew nothing at the time of the significance of the move.

I visited Ocean Island in April 1975, accompanied by my Parliamentary colleague, Sir Bernard Braine MP, at the invitation of the Banabans. We also visited the Gilberts where we had extensive consultations with Ministers and expatriate officials, including the Governor.

We were made fully aware of the Gilbertese view that the Banabans were similar in many respects to themselves. We had no hesitation in concluding, however, that, if one accepts a chance migration of

Gilbertese to Ocean Island over 300 years ago, there was virtually no communication between the two peoples before the advent of Europeans. As we said in our joint report to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary at the time, "what determines identity is what people believe themselves to be. We have been left in no doubt that Banabans consider themselves to be a separate people."

Mr Hiley need have no fear that those of us in Parliament who have long been pressing that justice should be done to the Banabans — both constitutionally and financially — will neglect Gilbertese interests. Should he have doubts in this respect, I would refer him to a lengthy and detailed contribution by Sir Bernard Braine to a debate in Committee on the Asian Development Bank Order on February 14, in which he identified four development projects in the Gilberts and pressed the Government to show a greater sense of urgency in arranging for them to be implemented.

The Banabans have been shamefully treated by British officials, not by the Gilbertese. The guilty party, Britain, must make restitution.
— Yours faithfully,

John Lee, MP

(Lab Birmingham Handsworth)

House of Commons,
London, SW1.

Fiji Times 15/9/76.

Letters to the EDITOR

Guarantees to the Banabans

Sir — I am given to understand that your issue of September 1 contained a letter from Mr Taomati Teai, Secretary to the Rabi Council stating that the Chief Minister of the Gilbert Islands has said that his Government will not feel bound by guarantees given by Britain.

This statement is false. The Rabi Council previously alleged that this statement was made at the meeting in Tarawa on June 19. I was present at that meeting as were many others from a number of different countries.

All approached have agreed that the Chief Minister made no such statement and it is perhaps of interest that the Chief Minister has already received an apology from one of those who repeated it.

Only by the greatest stretch of the imagination could what the Chief Minister say, (which was that he welcomed the fact that for the first time the Gilbert Islands and the Rabi Council were to be direct signatories of an agreement) be given the meaning given it by Mr Teai.

Should anyone still have the slightest doubts regarding the Gilbert Islands integrity, may I draw attention to the Chief Minister's offer to the Banabans in which he proposed that any agreement between them should be registered and supervised by the United Nations and be guaranteed by

the Government of Fiji and the United Kingdom.

Additionally, if there was the slightest intention of avoiding Gilbert Islands' obligations to the Banabans, it is difficult to see why at the initiative of the Chief Minister their rights, presently the subject of a British Government Statement of Intentions, are being written into the Gilbert Islands Constitution. — OTIUEA TANENTOA, Minister for Commerce and Industry, Gilbert Islands.

Banaban assurance

Sir — Whatever the merits of the Banaban claim for independence I would be grateful if you would allow me to assure the people of Fiji, through your columns, that their Government has done nothing about it to cause bad feeling between Fiji and the Gilbert Islands.

Certainly our Prime Minister has offered to act as chairman of a proposed round-table conference to try to solve some of the problems involved and we are confident that he would be absolutely fair to all.

Apart from that, he has been kind enough to say that Fiji would consider some form of association between an independent Banaba and Fiji, but he has made it absolutely clear that the Government of Fiji cannot involve itself in our

struggle.

Any bad feeling therefore must be one-sided, confined to the Gilberts and — if it exists at all — must arise from events over which neither the Government of Fiji nor the Banabans exercise any control.

The Banabans do recognise the economic problems of the Gilberts. We have proposed solutions that seem eminently reasonable.

Your editorial (September 13) refers to the "phosphate millions" that we have in the bank. We only wish you were right.

It is the Gilberts that have the phosphate millions — a hundred millions, our financial advisers calculate — plus bright prospects of continued economic aid from Britain.

We are thankful for what we have. We will try to preserve friendship with everyone.

But we shall never forget the idea of regaining the independence that Britain took from us, or of trying to prevent our homeland falling under the sovereignty of people who have never had it in all our history. — T. TEAI, Secretary, Rabi Council of Leaders.

Fiji Times 30th September.

Letters to the EDITOR

Banabans hit back

Sir - Mr Otiuea Tanentoa, Minister for Commerce and Industry in the Gilbert Islands Colony, obviously would like to shift the focus of attention from the Banaban demand for independence for Ocean Island.

He is seeking to do so by arguing the financial needs of the colony versus those of the Banabans (Fiji Times September 27).

The colony would have had to manage without revenue from Banaban phosphate had not our island been annexed by Britain and included in the Gilberts under pressure from British commercial interests eager to exploit its mineral wealth.

Until its riches were realised, neither the Gilberts nor Britain wanted to know about Ocean Island. The only reason for the early phosphate mining company urging Britain to take over was to keep rivals from other countries out.

Before many years had passed, they were objecting

that Ocean Island was not really one of the Gilberts, that it had been included only at their request and that far too much money was being sucked out of the phosphate industry to pay for the increasingly expensive administration of island that ought to support themselves by producing copra.

Mr Otiuea Tanentoa in effect is saying: "We Gilbertese know that the wealth was originally the Banabans' but we need it more than they do so we have a right to help ourselves."

We Banabans, after 76 years of being exploited, crave the right of self determination, but the greed of others denies us that simple justice.

Mr Tanentoa also claims that the colony has acted generously in making available to us \$A1300 of our own money instead of keeping us waiting for it until 1978 or 1979.

We are content to let your readers judge just how "generous" the colony is being.

The circumstances were that in 1973 we obtained an advance on our expected royalties and repayments were to be deducted at an agreed rate from royalties as they fell due.

If we had underpaid by the time phosphate mining ended we would have to make an adjustment: if we had overpaid, the Gilbert Islands Government would have to make a refund. Neither way was a very big sum likely to be involved.

The rate of repayment was to be geared to the price of phosphate. That price rose so dramatically that by about the middle of this year we suddenly realised that we had not only repaid the advance but more than \$1300 too much.

The colony had kept quiet about that. When we asked for our money back we found they had used it.

They tried to fall back on the excuse that they were not obliged to repay until mining ended-an arrangement made when it seemed that a final balancing would have to wait until then.

When we pointed out that the necessity for that had ceased when we cleared off our advance they said the best they could do was to pay us

in instalments. We accepted. Perhaps it was we who were generous? T. Teai, secretary, Rabi Council of Leaders

Fiji Times August 31.

GOVERNOR BACK FROM TALKS

The Banabans have no particular role to play in talks between Britain and the Gilbert Islands on self-government for the Gilberts, according to the British colony's Governor, Mr John Smith.

Speaking in a radio interview after his return to Tarawa from constitutional talks in London, Mr Smith said the Banaban issue was "quite separate" from matters that had been dealt with in London, the Atoll Pioneer reports.

DECLARED

He said while the Banabans argued that their position changed as constitutional progress was made within the Gilberts, they had refused to discuss an offer made by the Gilberts Chief Minister.

"The introduction of internal self-government does not in any way change the present position of Ocean

'No role' for the Banaban people

Island or the guarantees that the Banabans have from the British govern-

ment, he said.

The Banaban community, which lives in Fiji, is

pressing for the separation of Ocean Island, their homeland from the Gilberts.

They have claimed that the Gilberts move towards independence, and their exclusion from constitutional discussions on the British colony's future, could lead against their wishes to their permanent incorporation as part of the Gilberts.

Mr Smith said the Gilbertese Chief Minister, Mr Naboua Ratieta, had asked the Banabans to drop their independence claim for Ocean Island in return for such things as belonger status, an Ocean Island seat in the House of Assembly, and, if Fiji agreed, dual citizenship.

Mr Smith said that in any case the House of Assembly had declared that it had no wish to give up sovereignty over Ocean Island.

Ocean Island had been linked with the Gilberts for a long time and was the former capital, he said.

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LONDON DEAL SHOCKS BANABANS

Banaban leaders in Fiji yesterday vowed to continue fighting for the independence of Ocean Island, after hearing that a London constitutional conference had agreed on self-government for the Gilbert Islands.

And they said they were "astounded" that Gilbertese leaders could have come to an agreement with Britain in only six hours of talks.

AAP-Reuters reported from London yesterday that Britain had agreed to grant internal self-government to the Gilbert Islands in November as a prelude to complete independence, subject to parliamentary approval, in 1978.

The secretary of the Rabi Council of Leaders, Mr Thomas Teai, said his people had been told the London meeting would last for at least two days.

"The haste with which they were pushed through suggest that the parties wanted to get them over before there could be any public reaction to the petition we presented yesterday to the British High Commissioner in Suva," he said.

On Wednesday the Banabans delivered a for-

mal petition to the high commissioner, for despatch to London, protesting against the exclusion of the Banabans from the London talks and repeating their demand for the separation of Ocean Island from Gilbertese administration, and independence for it.

Mr Teai said the high commissioner, Mr Stanley Arthur, had said the petition would be in London within a few hours.

"It could well have been there before the talks opened," Mr Teai said.

"It appears to have been totally disregarded. The Banabans are united in their determination to resist in any way open to them the transfer of sovereignty over Banaba (Ocean Island) to the Gilberts."

He questioned also the validity of the grounds on which Britain said the Banabans should be excluded from the constitutional talks.

They felt it was "entirely appropriate" that they should have been invited to the talks in London because internal self-government for the Gilberts would obviously cover Ocean Island.

Mr Arthur had said the

talks were entirely about Gilbertese internal self-government, and it was inappropriate that the Banabans attend because their interests would not be affected.

He said the Banabans would be shown a draft order-in-council for the internal self-government constitution before it went to the Privy Council.

Mr Teai said the Banabans felt the British attitude was an opening through which the Gilbertese could win control of their island.

BANABANS'

SUPER
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SUNDAY Sun

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1976.

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COURT DRINK CHARGE!

Eye-catching

LONDON.— A drunkenness charge landed a Banaban leader who is a Methodist minister in court yesterday.



He is the Rev. Tebuke Rotan, London representative of the Banaban Islanders in their court fight against the British Government over phosphate mining at Ocean Island.

A policeman found him drunk outside the Home Office on Friday night, Bow Street Court was told.

The police prosecutor said Mr Rotan, 46, staggered past Downing Street before leaning against a lamp-post outside the Home Office.

The minister, who plead-

ed not guilty to being drunk and disorderly said he had two bottles of wine at dinner.

"I was stumbling because I was very hungry," he said.

"I didn't have any lunch and I had dinner late, with a lot of wine.

"All I wanted was a good sleep, so I drank wine."

The court found Mr Rotan guilty and conditionally discharged him on a three-month good behaviour bond.

The Banaban people, from Ocean Island in the Gilberts, now live at Rabi in Fiji.

British publications gave considerable prominence last week to two record-breaking High Court lawsuits by the Banabans against the British Government and the British Phosphate Commissioners.

The Economist, an influential weekly magazine, said that because of them "one of the nastier skeletons in Britain's colonial cupboards has come to light."

It reported comments by Mr Justice Megarry about the British Government's

"grave breaches" of obligations towards the Banabans and the late Sir Arthur Grimble's threats to them if they rejected terms for phosphate land leases in 1928.

The Economist quoted Mr Justice Megarry's statement: "A judge ought to direct attention to what he considers to be a wrong that he cannot right and leave it to the Crown to do what is considered to be proper."

It saw the statement as "virtually an invitation for the British Government to make a substantial ex gratia payment to the Banabans to recompense them for some of the money they were bullied out of in the past."

The London Evening Standard said the judge's ruling that the Banabans were entitled to damages for British Phosphate Commissioners' failure to replant mined-out parts of Ocean Island was the only part of his judgment to go in their favour.

Earlier, they won something of a moral victory when he spoke of the injustice they had suffered, the Standard said.

Help the needy

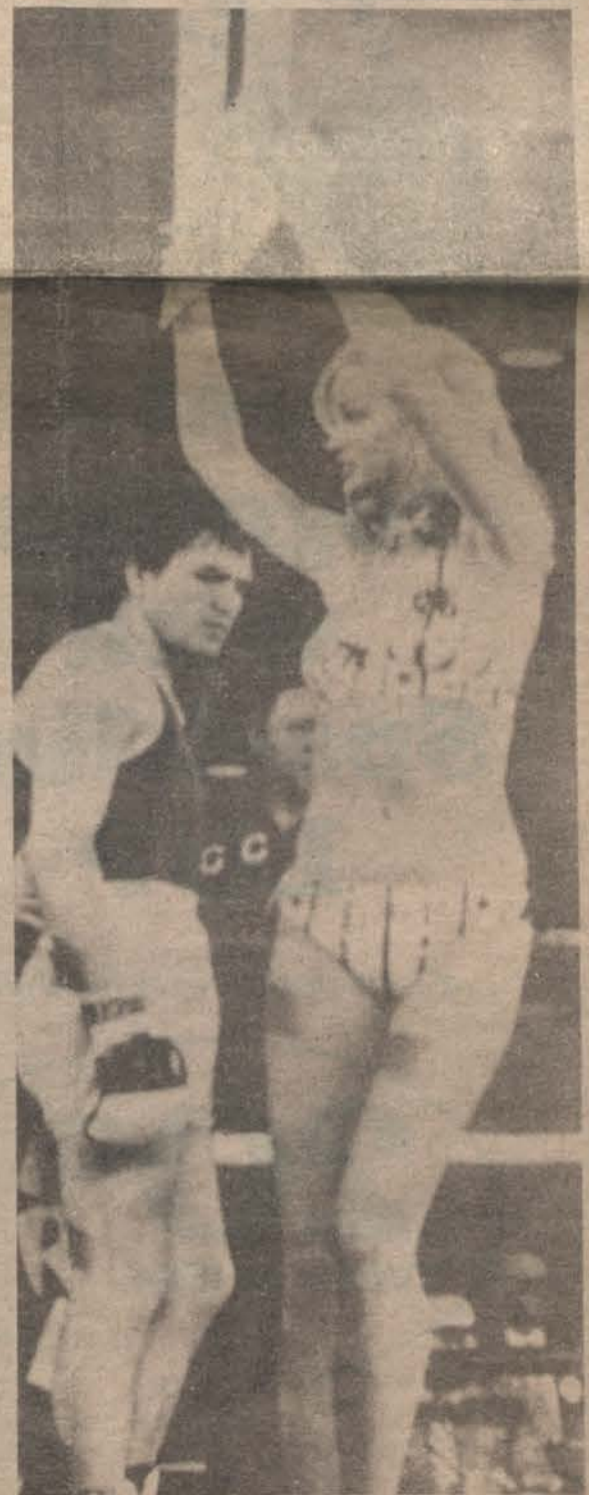
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RUSSIAN amateur heavyweight Evgeny Gorstkov appears distracted before his bout with American John Tate during Soviet-US championships in Las Vegas. Gorstkov is giving the eye to Peggy Kubena, 24, who was selected to carry round cards for the bouts. Gorstkov later lost a decision to Tate.



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YOU NEED YOUR COUNTRY'S PAPER TODAY—AND EVERY DAY!

Despite its huge involvement over the years in the phosphate mining of Ocean Island, Australia has been kept out of the lime-light in the battle by the Ocean Islanders for compensation and control of their island. But TONY MAIDEN reports from London that Australia was a party to British attempts to buy off the Ocean Islanders.

Australia's role in a shabby colonial story

A STRANGE story has come to light of how the British Government applied a diplomatic arm-twist to get Australian co-operation in an effort to quietly and cheaply buy-off the exploited — and lately increasingly troublesome — ex-inhabitants of phosphate-rich Ocean Island.

Australia politely parried the main thrust of the British aim, which was to embroil us in its attempts to reach a settlement of vexatious political questions on Ocean Island.

But Australia did acquiesce in the British plan to arrive at a joint "cheap" settlement of the islanders' financial complaints.

These machinations are largely revealed in two confidential documents — one a British Government letter to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, the other a Cabinet submission by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Senator Don Willessee — which I have obtained in London.

The exchange arose out of two high court actions instituted in Britain by the Ocean Islanders, or Banabans as they prefer to be called (the island was "Banaba" long before the white man arrived in 1900).

In the first, some 300 Banaban landowners are suing the British Phosphate Commissioners jointly and severally for \$A21.4 million. This is alleged to be the cost of restoring food-bearing trees on phosphate leases mined by the British Phosphate Commission, a non-profit body operated by the British, Australian and New Zealand Governments.

This action intimately involves Australia, but the second involves only Britain, which annexed Ocean Island in 1900 soon after the rich phosphate deposits were discovered there and which incorporated it into the Gilbert and Ellice Island colony 250 miles away in 1916.

The Banabans have sued the UK Attorney-General for damages relating to:

- Insufficient royalties paid generally in respect of Ocean Island phosphate rock, and:

- Misallocation by Britain of such royalties as were received.

At present the royalties go 85 per cent to the remote Gilbert and Ellice Island colony generally and only 15 per cent to the Banabans.

The first case was part heard earlier this year, before the lengthy law vacation intervened. It is largely complete, though the judge plans to visit Ocean Island before delivering his verdict. The second case should follow closely.

The Banabans have resorted to the courts in an effort to overcome a history of colossal and continuing exploitation.

Signing over exclusive rights to remove phosphate from their island for a mere £50 a year — a notorious agreement obtained by an Australian, Albert Ellis, who worked for the Pacific Islands Company and discovered the rich Ocean Island deposits — was the start of the Banabans' troubles.

They have since seen the island ripped apart to provide first vast profits for company shareholders, and later cheap

three BPC countries which bought out the Pacific Islands Company in 1920.

Additional Banaban lands were compulsorily acquired by the BPC in 1930 when the Banabans declined to sign it over. They were shipped out as slave labour by the Japanese in World War II, and at the war's end were rounded up and "re-settled" on the Fijian island of Rabi. It was no gift — they had to buy it out of their accumulated phosphate funds.

They have been trying ever since to get back to their original home, and to divert a larger slice of the remaining phosphate revenues to restoration work.

Ocean Island is too despoiled to ever support all the Banabans, but current thinking favours a two-island structure within some form of association with Fiji.

Whole the British Government has assured the Banabans that their Ocean Island land rights remain, it has frustrated efforts by the Banabans to re-colonise the island — for example, by declaring it a "closed district" so that anyone not born there requires a licence to live there, which hinders the youngest and fittest Banabans from helping the planned re-colonisation.

The Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony government, moreover, continues to reject any suggestion of independence for Ocean Island, though many authorities support the Banaban contention that Ocean Island's cultural and social links with the Gilbert and Ellice Islands are slim.

This refusal is certainly not based on concern for the colony's fundamental geographic integrity, since it has already been agreed that the Polynesian Ellice Islanders will be allowed to split from the Melanesian Gilbertese when independence comes to GEIC shortly.

It is directly based on the fact that Ocean Island phosphate revenues are the GEIC's only major source of income, apart from direct Whitehall aid.

The Banabans, who have spent years being shuffled from the British Government to the GEIC Government and back to Whitehall again, believe they are faced with a policy of deliberate obstruction while the valuable phosphate deposits are ripped from Ocean Island. At current high rates of extraction, this should be by about 1978.

In the meantime, every month of delay means a million pounds or so that the British Government does not have to pay out to support one of its last remaining colonial luxuries, The Gilbert and Ellice Islands,



and a million less for the Banabans to use to restore at least part of their ravaged homeland.

This may sound a parsimonious policy, but cynical officials in London point out significantly that the British public servant most intimately involved in the Banaban affair, Tony Bullock, head of the Pacific Dependencies Department, is currently on permanent secondment to the Treasury.

The British approach to dealings with the Banabans is nicely captured in its 1968 offer of a payment of £80,000 for use in the economic development of Rabi Island.

The offer was made "in consideration of the effects of phosphate mining on Ocean Island since 1900."

As two British MPs, Sir Bernard Braine and Mr John Lee, said in a report this April which savagely attacked Britain's Banaban policy, the figure was "derisory."

To give the British their due, they renewed the offer when the Banabans declined it, and repudiated the attempt to link it with the question of Ocean Island compensation.

However, as Braine and Lee point out: "It is clear from this unsavoury episode that the Banabans could have been led into an agreement which would have deprived them not only of their just dues but of any redress at law."

It was to seek their just dues, in face of delays and rejections on the part of the colonial authorities, that the Banabans instituted their London court actions.

What happened before the hearings began earlier this year, however, gives a fascinating insight into manoeuvres which can influence the fate of ex-

ploited minorities, unless they are very careful.

The British Government, with the help of a few veiled threats, managed to get its two partners in the BPC — Australia and New Zealand — to take part in a concerted drive to have the Banabans accept a single, absurdly small out-of-court settlement in return for abandoning both court actions.

Even better, it gained agreement for the money for this package settlement to come out of the BPC's \$A21m cash surplus, built up by the sale of the commission's Nauruan-based phosphate assets when that island (unlike Ocean Island) was granted independence.

In other words, the Australian Government agreed to link a case in which it was directly involved with another in which it was not and then help to pick up the tab for both.

This might be defensible, particularly if by participating in such a deal Australia had sought to get favourable terms for its near neighbours, the Banabans, to whom it was not indebted, as we shall see.

In fact, as far as can be determined, we did not.

In a "Dear John" letter last December from an official in the British High Commission to Mr J. R. Rowland, deputy secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the British argued that although the two actions were legally separate, they could not be treated as such.

To settle the action against the BPC commissioners without at the same time settling the royalty action against the British Crown would have two important results, Canberra was reminded.

Firstly it would put the Banabans "well in funds" to pursue the loyalty action. Second, since settlement of the replant-

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PM IN NZ TO PLEAD CASE OF BANABA

The Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, flew to New Zealand yesterday hoping to persuade the British Minister of State, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, to meet representatives of the Rabi Council of Leaders before Britain granted independence to the Gilbert Islands.

Lord Goronwy-Roberts had earlier planned to visit Fiji and meet Ratu Sir Kamisese to discuss the Banaban issue but had cancelled his visit reportedly because of a ban imposed by the Fiji Council of Trade Unions on all flights to the Gilberts.

REFLECTED

Before leaving Nadi Airport, the Prime Minister said he hoped his discussions with Lord Goronwy-Roberts would prove satisfactory so that he could tell the leader of the Rabi Council, Rev Tekoti Rotan, that the Banabans would be fully consulted before the final move into independence for the Gilberts.

Britain has rejected the Rabi islanders' claim for independence for Ocean Island, their ancestral home, and has treated the island as part of the Gilberts.

The Prime Minister plans to meet Lord Goronwy-Roberts, who is on a visit to New Zealand and Australia, in Wellington.

Ratu Sir Kamisese said he hoped to persuade Lord Goronwy-Roberts to see the representatives of the Rabi Council at a meeting arranged for them a week after he returned to London.

He said he hoped there might be some indication as to a fairer division in the proceeds from phosphate while it lasts on Ocean Island.

LIFT BAN

The Prime Minister asked the president of the Fiji Council of Trade Unions, Mr Apisai Tora, at Nadi yesterday to lift the ban on air services until the time Lord Goronwy-Roberts met Rev Rotan.

Mr Tora agreed to lift the ban and added that the FCTU felt that it should not jeopardise things.

Before Ratu Sir

Kamisese flew to New Zealand, the chiefs of the Western Division performed a Fijian ceremony of where they presented him a tabua (whale's tooth) and Ratu Jona Vata, of Rakiraki, presented a petition on behalf of the chiefs and the supporters of the Banaban cause.

The petition urged the Fiji Government to obtain from Britain without delay a government-to-government assurance that Ocean Island would be excluded from self governing Tuarua (Gilbert Islands).

The petition wants Ocean Island to remain the direct responsibility of Britain until it convenes a round table conference to decide its future status.

Fiji should be invited as an independent sovereign state that must necessarily be involved in shaping the political future of the South Pacific once Britain had rid itself of its responsibility in this part of the world and had withdrawn from it, it said.

WHOLE

It urged the Fiji Government to call immediately upon the secretary general of the Commonwealth Secretariat to seek Britain's approval for the Banaban problem to be solved peacefully by negotiation among all those intimately involved in the future of the Pacific and the Commonwealth as whole.

The petition said they were convinced that a reasonable and satisfactory solution could be found in principle by the Fiji Government that once Ocean Island was granted independence it could be granted associate status with Fiji.

WEATHER

Forecast: Light rain in north, fair elsewhere. Details P12.



BANABANS and their supporters march at Lautoka. Leading the march are the Tui Nadi, Ratu Senator Napolioni Dawal, Senator Jai Ram Reddy, Ratu Julian Toganivalu, the Tui Vitogo, Ratu Jo Sovasova, the Mayor of Lautoka, Cr Hari Punja, the Tui Vuda, Ratu Josela Tavaiqia, and other Fijian leaders.

Tangshan quake toll at 100,000

PEKING — Chinese officials have told foreigners that 100,000 people were killed in the city of Tangshan by last month's powerful earthquake, reliable sources said on Saturday.

The sources said the figure, not openly published, has been circulated in factories and universities.

The sources said the figure

LATE NEWS

HONG KONG. — Another earthquake shook China early yesterday, the Royal Observatory here reported. Its magnitude could not yet be determined but the epicentre was about 950 miles north-west of Hong Kong, the observatory said. — AAP-Reuters.

was approximate and applied only to Tangshan, which has some 1.6 million inhabitants, not to the entire stricken area.

Records say 820,000 people died in an earthquake in China in 1556, the highest toll from a single earthquake disaster known to historians.

DEVASTATING

The sources quoted Chinese officials as having said about 2,000 people were killed when Tangshan's biggest hospital was swallowed up by the earthquake.

Meanwhile a leading geologist said in Manila that Tuesday's devastating earthquake in the Philippines was the latest part of an extraordinary adjustment of the Earth's crust which has been going on for months. — AAP-Reuters.

Girmit party formed

A 76-year-old former Legislative Council member, Mr Brahma Das Lakshman, announced the formation of a new political party called the Progressive Girmit Party at Lautoka on Saturday.

One party was for the descendants of Indian indentured labourers and it hoped to put up candidates in the coming general election, he said.

Speaking from a cane lorry at Namoli Park, Mr Lakshman told about 100 people that the descendants of the indentured labourers had certain original rights under the British Government which had been ignored.

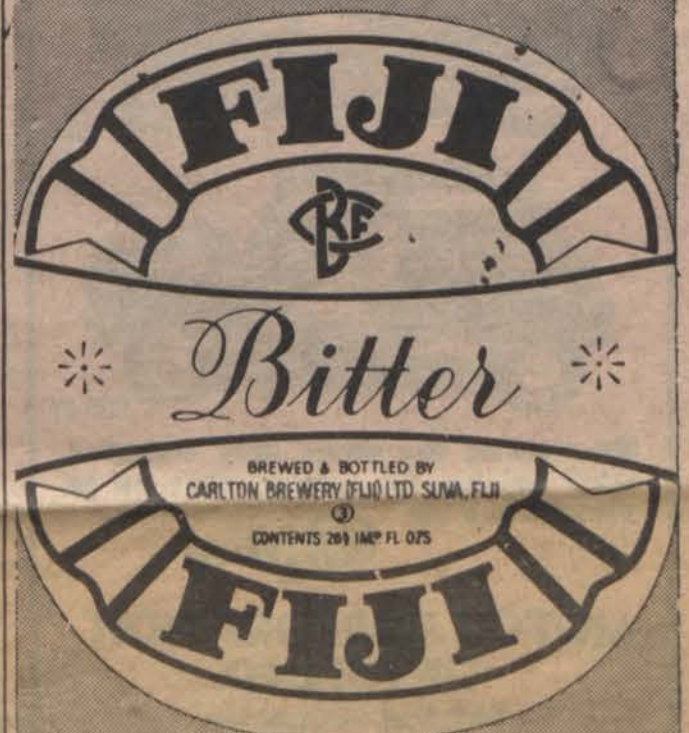
BONDAGE

As a result, they had second-class citizenship status in Fiji.

When the Indians came to Fiji under the indenture system they were bonded for five years, after which they were free.

But the introduction of 30-year leases for agricultural land would mean lifelong bondage for the Indians and their families.

YOUR BEER...



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OTHER PAGES

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FIVE US Navy moves on Korea

SEVEN China's gift to Zambia

CENTRE Flagstaff's soccer victory

FIFTEEN Escott rugby final

BACK Nadi wins schools soccer

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The case for the Banabans

THE British Government will be acting unwisely and unfairly if it ignores the strong, dignified and eloquent protests made in Suva on Wednesday afternoon by the Banaban people and their many supporters.

The issue is quite simple, the demand totally reasonable — that the Banaban people, arbitrarily included in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1916, be now justly included in the discussions between Great Britain and the Gilberts people about the political future of the islands.

That political future must involve the Banabans, and their attempt to achieve the basic right of self-determination of their own future.

As the Mayor of Suva, Cr Len Usher, pointed out on Wednesday afternoon, any government or governments which are about to make decisions about a group of people have a duty to inform them about the way the decisions are being made.

The only proper way to do that, obviously, is to include the Banaban people in the discussions themselves.

The British Government, and the Gilberts Council of Ministers, should not underestimate the firm resolve of the Banaban people, nor the widespread nature of their support.

Supporting them on the official dais on Wednesday were Government ministers and leading members of the National Federation Party.

Among the protest marchers were representatives of every province in Fiji. It was an impressive occasion, made all the more effective by the quiet dignity of the protest.

Nor will support be confined to Fiji.

The Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who has already criticised both Britain and the Gilberts for ignoring a previous agreement about settling the question of phosphate royalties before proceeding to constitutional talks, obviously feels the matter must come up for discussion at the South Pacific Forum in Nauru later this month.

At best, it may be that the Banaban leaders will be able to state their case directly; at worst, their situation will be discussed as part of the business arising from the minutes of the last forum.

In any event, this will give the Banaban cause yet another platform, and an international one, from which to advance their plainly just and reasonable demand — for inclusion in any talks, preliminary or final, which involve the future of a proud and independent people.

BACK

....looking behind the news

On Wednesday, Fiji's Banaban community organised a colourful demonstration to protest their exclusion from constitutional talks between Britain and the Gilbert Islands, which opened in London on the same day. The demonstration, led by a Banaban brass band and young dancing girls with men in their traditional dress, marched from Albert Park to the Suva Civic Centre to deliver a petition to the British High Commissioner in Fiji, Mr Stanley Arthur, for forwarding to London. The petition was delivered to the High Commission office by Mr Tekoti Rotan and three other members of the island council. Mr Arthur did not come out to receive it. The following is the complete text of the Banaban petition.

Banaban appeal

Your Excellency,

Kindly permit me to hand this protest to you on behalf of the Banaban people and their Council of Leaders.

Within hours, constitutional talks will be under way in London between your Government and representatives of the Gilbert Islands Council of Ministers. It is clearly intended by your Government that as a result of these talks an early date will be fixed on which the Gilbert Islands will acquire full powers of internal self-government.

It is against the custom of our Pacific Islands for one people to meddle in the affairs of their neighbours and we Banabans wish the people of Tuarua — as the sixteen Gilbert atolls have traditionally been known — God speed in their progress towards independence.

But as your Government knows full well the homeland of my people — Banaba — forms part of the present Gilbert Islands Colony. For the administrative convenience of a former British colonial administration, Banaba was bundled in with the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in 1916. The action was an arbitrary one: The consent of my people was not sought.

And today, as the direct result of a colonial Order-In-Council of which we knew nothing at the time, our ancestral homeland is about to become a mere district of an internally self-governing Gilbert Islands State.

First time

For the first time in the long history of our people it is proposed that our island should be placed under the suzerainty of a self-governing Tuarua.

If we have demanded a hearing at this week's constitutional talks in London it has been to insist that self-government for the Gilberts does not mean that Banaba will become a colony of Tuarua.

The people of Tuarua have never, in the countless generations preceding British rule in the Pacific, conquered our land and our people.

In so far as they knew about our existence, they never expressed the slightest wish to dominate us. It is your Government that is about to hand Banaba to Tuarua.

Again this action is to be taken without our consent and for Britain's selfish convenience. The only difference today is that your convenience is financial rather than administrative, and that instead of being able to manipulate at will a people ignorant of the meaning of Colony,

Petition to UK Govt

Protectorate, Order In Council, Act of Parliament and Colony-Ordinance, you are faced by a united people with the will, the knowledge and the means to oppose your Government's attempt at a final solution of what Britain has always regarded as the Banaban problem.

I hope, in addition, that it will also be plain to your Excellency that we are not alone and without friends to stand with us and insist — even at the eleventh hour — that Britain must not once again ditch the Banabans.

Assurances

Your government's response to my Council's request for representation at the London talks has been met with soft words, with assurances that the matters to be discussed do not concern us, with the promise that the interests of the Banaban people will be considered at a later stage, when final sovereign powers are to be vested in Tuarua.

How will our interests on Ocean Island be protected by your Government once full internal powers over the district of Ocean Island are handed over to the Government in Tuarua?

Even today, when power over the Colony of the Gilberts lies in the hands of Her Majesty's Secretary of State and in the hands of her Governor, the only protection we have for our interests stems from our own efforts to remedy the wrongs done to us and to guard against the perpetration of the ultimate injustice, the disposal of our island of Banaba to the Gilbertese.

Sacrifice

Our efforts on our own behalf should not need to be catalogued. Since my people rid themselves in 1965 of the falsely-named Banaban Adviser — whose advice consistently benefitted not us but your colonial administration of the day — we have patiently, exhaustively, and at great expense and sacrifice, pursued our legitimate aims through all constitutional and peaceful means.

We petitioned your Government for independence as long ago as January 1974 and your decision is

still awaited two and a half years later.

We have had innumerable meetings and seemingly unending correspondence with your Government. We have journeyed many times to the United Nations in New York where your permanent representatives have lobbied assiduously, and sometime unscrupulously, against us.

We have, at your specific request, sought on at least five occasions to discuss our wish for independence with Tuarua Government, despite the fact that they did not have the power to grant what we demanded.

Consensus

On the last two of these occasions, in October and December last year, we succeeded in reaching a vital consensus with them, thanks above all to the invaluable mediation of the Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara.

Joint appeals went out from Banabans and Gilbertese at Tuarua in October demanding an immediate conference with Britain, Australia and New Zealand, countries which have benefitted so hugely from the pillaging of our resources during three-quarters of a century.

We have waited ten months now for such a meeting to be convened without a sign from your Government that Britain has any intention of facing up to her financial responsibilities towards the Gilbertese, let alone the Banabans.

It is clear to everyone in the Pacific by now that the Gilbertese will cling to the rights Britain has led them to believe they have over our island home until such time as they receive adequate assurances for their financial future.

It is equally and honourably clear that your Government will continue to avoid — at whatever cost to the future of her dependent peoples — her moral responsibilities.

It is sadly evident that Britain will not pay a penny compensation which she is not ordered to pay by a Court of Law.

And now, in order to make certain that all the remaining mineral wealth of our island of Banaba will go to subsidize her continuing obligations towards the Gilberts, Britain is prepared to destroy our island homeland and the very future existence of our people.

Subterfuge

Furthermore, your Government is seeking to attain this ignoble objective by subterfuge: By quietly passing full powers of internal government over Banaba to the Gilbertese while protesting at the same time that the negotiations about to take place do not concern my people.

Your Excellency, I am here to protest at your Government's outrageous treatment of the Banaban people. I wish you speedily to convey this protest to your Government together with our final demands — since it is now clear to us that we are to be excluded from this vital constitutional conference.

First, we demand your Government's re-affirmation that, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State assured us in April 1975 in the presence of the entire Rabi Council, your Government does not wish to put us under an administration under which we do not want to live.

Second, we demand that the district of Ocean Island be specifically excluded from any constitutional measure which may grant powers of internal self-government to the Gilbert Islands Colony. (ROTAN TITO), Chairman, Rabi Council of Leaders.



MARCHING under the slogan "No Gilbertese rule for Banaba," Rabi Island Council members lead the Banaban protest march in Suva yesterday.

2500 RALLY IN SUPPORT OF BANABA

Fiji's Banaban community yesterday organised a colourful, carefully staged and resounding condemnation in Suva of their exclusion from constitutional talks between Britain and the Gilbert Islands which open in London today.

A procession of about 1000 people, led by a Banaban brass band and young dancing girls and men in traditional dress marched from Albert Park to the Suva Civic Centre to deliver a petition to the British High Commissioner in Fiji, Mr Stanley Arthur, for forwarding to London.

They followed a man carrying a placard saying: "No Gilbertese rule for Banaba."

Outside the Civic Centre, where the British High Commission has its office, the chairman of the Rabi Island Council, Mr Rotan Tito, told about 2500 listeners:

"We seek independence for Ocean Island because we do not wish to lose our right of ownership or freedom of access to our ancestral home."

He accused Britain of breaking a promise to involve the Banabans in talks on independence for the Gilbert Islands, of which Ocean Island, also known by its people as Banaba, is politically a part.

PREJUDICE

In a statement also issued yesterday, Mr Arthur denied that Britain was ignoring the Banaban position.

The London talks with the Gilbertese delegation were entirely about internal self-government for the

Gilberts, not independence, he said.

"None of the decisions likely to be taken at the talks will in any way prejudice Banaban interests, including Her Majesty's Government's special relationship with, and undertakings to, the Banabans," he said.

He said Banaban representation at the talks was therefore inappropriate.

However, as a reassurance, the British Government would let them see a draft Order-in-Council for Gilbertese self-government so that they could comment on relevant passages before it went to the Privy Council in October.

The Banaban petition Commission office by Mr Tito and three other members of the island council.

Mr Arthur did not come out to receive it.

A Banaban spokesman Mr Tekoti Rotan told the Fiji Times: "We asked him to receive it in public."

He said: "No, you will be met at the door and taken to my office because I don't want any publicity."

The demonstration, shepherded without in-

By BEACHCOMBERS



FLOTSAM & JETSAM



WHILE the Banabans staged their public relations demonstration outside the British High Commission, in Suva on Wednesday, much to the interest and enjoyment of about 2000 lookers-on, high commissions staff stayed behind curtained windows inside.

One of the Banabans' public relations advisers had a bit of free advice for the high commissioner.

He reckoned it would have made for a nice friendly little goodwill gesture had the high commissioner agreed to receive the Banaban petition outside in public, instead of sitting stiff and tight-lipped at his desk waiting for the Banabans to be ushered in to him.

How stupid of him!!

Monday 20/7/76

Phosphate pact disputed by Rabi leaders

The Rabi Council of Leaders denied in Suva yesterday that the Banabans had signed a new agreement in London for the mining of another 100 acres of phosphate land on Ocean Island.

A report had said the Foreign Office in London announced representatives of Britain, the Gilbert Islands and the Banabans signed an agreement.

British officials said that under the new agreement, which would reflect higher prices for phosphate, 50 per cent of the royalties would go to the Gilbert Islands and the other 50 per cent to the Banabans.

But they declined to give details of the additional amount of phosphate to be extracted or its value.

The Rabi Council of Leader's secretary, Mr Thomas Teai, said the announcement by the British Foreign Office was incorrect.

He called the announcement "misleading".

Mr Teai said all that had happened was that changes had been made in the timing of payments due to the Banabans from phosphate lands they had leased in 1973.

A comparatively small area of Ocean Island was leased for mining at that time and the Banabans insisted on better terms than they had been getting for many years for the greater part of the island.

85 PER CENT

They proposed to the British Government, which decides the proportions which the phosphate proceeds shall be divided between the Gilberts Colony and the Banabans, that it was about time those proportions were reversed.

The Banabans should get the 85 per cent the Gilberts had been receiving for a long time and the Gilberts should get the 15 per cent that had been the Banaban share.

That proposal was rejected. Instead, after hard

bargaining, the British Government agreed to divide the proceeds equally between the Banabans and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, as it was then.

But Mr Teai said this equal share came from only a fraction of the overall phosphate area being mined.

The Banabans still received only 15 per cent of the proceeds from the vastly greater part of the island.

All that had just been agreed in London was that the Banabans, instead of being kept waiting for certain payments until the end of mining on Ocean Island in June or July 1979, would receive them annually.

100 ACRES

"To say that under this so-called new agreement 50 per cent of the phosphate proceeds will come to us could mislead people into believing that we are to get half of all the proceeds," he said.

"That certainly is not the case.

"Nor were there 100 acres of phosphate land still available on Ocean Island that could have been leased."

Mr Teai referred also to a statement issued in London by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office last weekend about the controversial talks there on a constitution for the self-government at the Gilbert Islands.

That statement, released to the Press in Fiji by the British High Commission in Suva, said the constitution would safeguard undertakings about the future of Ocean Island given to the Banabans in a 1947 statement of intentions.

The Foreign and Commonwealth office said "This is in accordance with the offer made by the Chief Minister in 1975."

The undertakings referred to, Mr Teai said were given in 1974 in response to Banaban insistence that if they decided to make a permanent home on Rabi Island their rights on

● TURN TO P12

WEATHER

Forecast: Mainly fine.
Details P12.

OTHER PAGES

THREE
Building industry talks

FIVE
Ford has small margin

SIX
India in big oil league

SEVEN
Education overhaul system

CENTRE
Raviravi aquaculture project

BACK
Records topple in Olympics

Phosphate denial

● FROM P1

Ocean Island would be safeguarded.

"The British Government gave us a solemn assurance that we would have the right to travel freely to Ocean Island whenever we wished and could go back there to live if we wanted," he said.

CLOSED

"Yet last year, when we sent groups of young Banabans by ship to re-establish a Banaban presence in our homeland, we found that the Gilberts administration had declared it a closed district and all Banabans not born there were

required to obtain a permit to land.

"That was a flagrant breach of the undertaking the British had given. After that, we cannot put any trust in other assurances.

"Moreover, the offer by the Chief Minister of the Gilberts to which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office refers was part of a 15-point plan put forward by the Gilberts as a substitute for our demand for independence for Ocean Island.

"In fact, it offered us nothing. My council rejected it."

The two faces of Sir Arthur Grimble

By R. BARRY O'BRIEN

A COLONIAL administrator, who became a celebrated broadcaster and author of one of the world's most successful books of reminiscence, has been portrayed in a harsh, new light.

A High Court case this week showed an unknown face of Sir Arthur Grimble, who became for millions through his broadcasts and books the archetypal British colonial servant, carrying the white man's burden in far-flung corners of the Empire.

The case has been brought against the British Government by 500 people from Ocean Island, part of the Pacific colony of the Gilbert Islands, where Sir Arthur spent his early career.

Sir Arthur, who recalled his Pacific experience in his broadcasts and his best-seller "A Pattern of Islands," which has sold more than one million copies since it was published in 1952, has been branded as a villain of the case.

£22 million claim

The Ocean Islanders, who are claiming £22 million from Britain for phosphates mined in the island, have accused Sir Arthur of forcing them to sell the phosphates too cheaply when he was resident commissioner in 1926-33.

An alleged letter from Sir Arthur produced in evidence told the islanders that they had shamed "the important Chief" (King George V) by refusing to sell phosphates to the British Phosphate Commissioners for 10½ pence (old money) a ton.

The letter threatened the islanders that their land would be compulsorily acquired and their villages destroyed if they did not agree to sell.

Mr Justice Megarry, summing up on Tuesday on the 223rd day of the case, which has cost £750,000 to date, said the letter contained "grievous threats" and it was impossible to read it "without a sense of outrage."

Retired in 1948

Sir Arthur Grimble, who first went out to Ocean Island as a cadet in 1914 and remained in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands until 1933, was Governor of the Seychelles and later the Windward Islands before he retired in 1948. He died at 68 in 1956.

He surprised his Colonial Service colleagues with his success as a broadcaster and author after his retirement. He had won note as a scholar and anthropologist but few had been aware of his gift for popular story-telling.

The new picture of him threatening the islanders has caused even bigger surprise among people who remember his broadcasts and have read his books because it is so different from the self-portrait which he painted.

Sir Arthur emerged from his broadcasts and books as a wise, benevolent administrator, affectionately caring for the people in his charge and able to take a lightly mocking view of the responsibilities of empire.

The tone was set in the prologue of "A Pattern of Island" when he described the popular view of Britain's imperial role when he joined the Colonial Service in 1913.

'Almighty Anglo-Saxon'

"The Almighty was beyond doubt Anglo-Saxon, and the popular conception of Empire resolutely simple Dominion

Sir Arthur said in the book that Edward Eliot, Resident Commissioner when he arrived in the Gilbert Islands, was struggling at the time of his arrival to improve the conditions that governed the mining of phosphate on Ocean Island.

"His aims were to secure for the Baanahan (Ocean Island) villagers an increase of the tonnage-royalties paid into a trust fund for their phosphate, and to set up guards against the premature encroachment of the diggings upon their villages. He won his fight eventually in the teeth of much official misunderstanding.

"Fifteen years later, as Resident Commissioner myself, I was called to add a little to the foundations he had laid, and others added more after me."

Sir Arthur added that he was fortunate to have Eliot as his first chief "for he was a personification of the protective spirit which inspire the best servants of autocracy with benevolence in the field."

One of Sir Arthur's best stories, told in a broadcast and in "A Pattern of Island," was how he dived into a lagoon as live bait for octopus hunters. This was how the islanders went octopus-hunting, and when invited to join them he felt unable to refuse.

"The Gilbertese reserved all their most ribald humour for physical cowardice. . . . I decided I would rather face the octopus."

Sir Arthur's gifts as a raconteur showed to perfection in his broadcasts. He had a perfect voice for his stories and the way he told them made him the envy of professional broadcasters in the days when radio had a bigger audience than television.

Daughters dismayed

Sir Arthur's widow died this year, but he is survived by four daughters, who have been dismayed by the references to him in the Ocean Island case.

His second daughter Rosemary who is married to the author Adrian Seligman, illustrated Sir Arthur's books and brought out some of his unpublished writings in a book in 1972.

"The relationship between my father and the islanders was a very good and a very true one," she said. "Today in the Gilbert Islands he is remembered with great affection still."

Surprise was also expressed by Mr Philip Snow, author of the article about Sir Arthur in the Dictionary of National Biography.

Mr Snow, brother of Lord Snow the novelist, is a former colonial administrator who served in Fiji and knew Sir Arthur in the later years of his life.

Very surprised

At his home in Angmering, Sussex, Mr Snow, who was Bursar of Rugby after he left the Colonial Service and is now retired, said: "I am very surprised. It is not in the character of the man I knew.

"I always thought he had the greatest affection and sympathy for the people he was administering and would not be party to any harsh action.

"He was a benevolent man with the interests of the islanders very much at heart. He was constantly thinking of schools, hospitals and any means of improving their way of life."

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'Almighty Anglo-Saxon'

"The Almighty was beyond doubt Anglo-Saxon, and the popular conception of Empire resultantly simple. Dominion over palm and pine (or whatever else happened to be noticeably far-flung) was the heaven-conferred privilege of the Bulldog Breed. Kipling had said so.

"The colonial possessions, as everyone so frankly called them, were properties to be administered. . . . Kindly administered, naturally—nobody but the most frightful boonder could possibly question our sincerity about that—but firmly too, my boy, firmly too, lest the school children of Empire forget who were the prefects and who the fags."

The book was acclaimed for its humour and charm, and its tales of a romantic life amid Pacific coral atolls in bygone days made it an immediate success with the war-weary public in the post-war era of austerity.

Still in print, the book has sold more than one million copies in English, was included in a series of the world's "50 Best Books" and has sold 100,000 copies in foreign languages.

Grey pall

The book dealt only with the early part of his career ending before he became resident commissioner in Tarawa island, administrative centre of the Gilbert group, and did not cover the negotiations over phosphate mining.

Sir Arthur described his first sight of Ocean Island's phosphate crushing-mill throwing clouds of dust into the air and covering the greenery of the island with a grey pall as he arrived at the island in the steamer Moresby.

"Its belchings seemed to us as grossly out of place as a series of eructations in the face of the infinite.

"Yet the major impertinence was ours: the unmannerly monster we saw before us was helping to keep a million acres of pasture-land green in Australia and New Zealand and but for its disfiguring industry on Ocean Island, there would have been little enough revenue to maintain services for the 30,000 Gilbertese and Ellice folk who lived by their bright lagoons in the atolls to east and south."

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NORTH SEA OIL SPILL 'THREAT TO BIRD LIFE'

The first case of North Sea oil pollution in Britain has been reported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Mr Roy Dennis, Highlands officer of the Society, said he found the oil at Loth, Sutherland. A sample was sent to the Highland River Purification Board for analysis. The board confirmed that the oil matched specimens from a field 14 miles off Brora, Sutherland, by MESA (UK) petroleum.

Mr Dennis said yesterday that this was the first known beach pollution by North Sea oil, although there had been several spills in distant waters. The amount of oil found at Loth was small, and only a few oiled gulls were seen, but September was the safest time of the year for birds there.

Mr Dennis said: "This is just what we have feared since North Sea oil was discovered. The scale of damage to bird life caused by spillage could be enormous."

On the twelfth day of Christmas...

...More than 70 spastic babies will have been born. They will all need a special kind of love, care and attention. Help us to help them by sending a donation, or writing for our covenant/legacy leaflets to: The Spastics Society,

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**The
Spastics
Society**

AIR BAN MAY DO HARM TO BANABA

A Fiji trade union ban on air services to the Gilbert Islands may mean a setback for the Banaban people in their fight for a better deal from Britain on the future of their Ocean Island homeland.

The British Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, was due to discuss the Ocean Island issue with the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, at lunch in Suva tomorrow.

But yesterday he suddenly cancelled the meeting — possibly after hearing that the Fiji Council of Trade Unions might interfere with his travel.

The Prime Minister told a news conference yesterday afternoon that at a meeting he had with an FCTU executive delegation in the morning, he had been told the ban on the British ministerial party was cancelled.

But the British had very diplomatically said the minister had been forced to change his itinerary and that he would have time for the meeting in Wellington or Canberra next week.

The FCTU's change of mind had come too late to change the minister's decision not to stop in Suva.

"I don't know what has happened to the Rabi cause," the Prime Minister said.

"It seems to be too many people doing too much in different directions."

A spokesman for the FCTU told the Fiji Times the ban on the British

minister had been lifted at the request of the Banaban Council of Leaders.

But the ban on handling planes destined for the Gilberts would continue.

The British High Commissioner in Suva, Mr Stanley Arthur, said Lord Goronwy-Roberts could not now visit Suva because domestic difficulties had held him up in London.

At the lunch set for tomorrow, the Prime Minister and British minister would have discussed the Banaban plea for the independence of Ocean Island and their objections to being excluded from talks between Britain and the Gilberts on self-government for the Gilberts.

EFFORTS UNDERMINED

The Gilberts are due to get self-government in October.

The Banabans claim this will make it impossible to secure independence for Ocean Island before the Gilbertese attain total independence.

The FCTU put a ban on the handling of aircraft flying to the Gilberts in sympathy with the Banabans.

Ratu Sir Kamisese told the news conference that the ban had undermined the efforts he had made at the Nauru South Pacific Forum meeting to help the Banabans.

Before and after the forum he asked the Banaban leaders to get the FCTU to lift the ban.

But the message had apparently not got to the unions.

When he raised the Ocean Island

matter at the forum he did not get any support.

Forum delegates told him that one reason for their reluctance to support Air Pacific as a regional airline was that an industrial dispute in Fiji could "gum up" the whole region's communications.

Ratu Sir Kamisese, who has been acting as an intermediary in the Ocean Island row at the request of all sides, said Lord Goronwy-Roberts was willing to see him in Wellington next Monday and Tuesday or in Canberra next Friday.

Noting trade union intervention in the dispute and marches staged by the Banabans, he said all were "pulling in different directions and I don't think we are doing any good for the Rabi case."

He saw nothing wrong with the Suva demonstration by the Banabans last month in support of their case.

He thought they made their point.

Asked whether he thought the Banabans were going too far in their agitation, the Prime Minister said they felt they had only three months left in which to get what they wanted.

"They are desperate," he said. "They want to be heard."

"I can only say that whatever we may think is overdue at present, it is an act of a desperate people and I would be desperate if I was in their case."

A shabby

S/Express of 5/12/76

chapter

THERE can be nothing but shame over the way the people of tiny Ocean Island in the South Pacific have been treated by Britain.

We grew rich on phosphates mined on the island and paid them a miserable £50 a year.

The islanders were screwed into the ground by an old hypocrite of a colonial governor, Sir Arthur Grimble.

In time, the dust from the phosphate buried their homes and they had to move a thousand miles to another island.

And what happened when the islanders turned to us for help?

They — and there are only 3,000 of them — were made to go to court, at an estimated cost of 1,000,000 dollars for a case that dragged on for 226 days.

At the end the judge ruled that the Crown had no obligation to them and they lost a £21 million claim.

Is it any wonder that after that their leader Tebuke Rotan went out and got drunk?

The British Government should bring to an end this shabby and scandalous chapter in our colonial history by giving the islanders their money, down to the last penny.