Robert Norton. *Race and Politics in Fiji.* St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977. Pp. xv, 210, maps, bibliography. $17.95.

Based upon his doctoral dissertation, Norton's work is a substantial and very useful analysis and description of the politics of contemporary Fiji. It is also a valuable contribution to the small but growing list of published works about the politics of the Pacific islands' states as they emerge from their colonial condition. It is also a useful addition to the list of works dealing with the politics of multi-ethnic communities, like Guyana and Malaya to which Norton compares, in some respects, the situation in Fiji.

Norton describes the social setting of Fiji's politics as one in which racial and ethnic identities are fixed by historical and economic circumstances. The indigeneous Fijians are today a minority of the population, with the Indians, who began immigration to Fiji to become indentured laborers on the sugar plantations 100 years ago, actually outnumbering them. The Europeans, mostly British, retain the foothold they secured for themselves as colonial rulers and continue to dominate the economy. Although they constitute only 3 percent of the total population, Europeans and part-Europeans exercise an enormous economic authority.

Modern democratic politics began in Fiji in 1963 when, for the first time, the bulk of the Fijian population cast their ballots in a general election. The beginnings of the present Federation (largely Indian) and Alliance (largely Fijian and European) parties were during the mid-1960s. The Federation Party grew up in the northwest sugar growing area and the Alliance Party was founded to counter it in the southeast.

All of the elements for continuous racial conflict seem to be present in Fiji. There is little intermarriage between the ethnic groups. Fijians are Christians, while the Indians are mostly Hindu or Muslims. Each group prefers to speak its own language; each attend its own schools for the most part. Fijians live largely in villages under a form of paternal communalism, while the individualistic Indians and Europeans control the business life of the community. The Europeans control the big enterprises, and the Indians operate small stores and businesses in both the rural and urban areas. For all of these social cleavages, however, organized violent action by one group against another has been notably absent from the Fijian political scene. Not that extremist appeals have not been made. There are those Fijian nationalists who have vowed to drive the Indians from the country, but the anti-Indian Fijian response has been at the ballot box, rather than at the barricades. Fijian extremists have succeeded in convincing some Fijians that they merited electoral support. In the April 1977 elections, the Fijian Nationalist Party took enough votes from the Alliance party for it to lose its majority in the House of Representatives. In the elections in November 1977, however, the Alliance Party regained its majority, and the Fijian Nationalist Party lost votes. Apparently, most Fijians preferred national stability to race-baiting, which was the chief plank in the platform of the Fijian Nationalist group.

This brings us to Norton's major point: that politics can be utilized to manage racial divisions. The idea is scarcely novel but does bear repeating. It has been through politics that the cleavages in many societies have been resolved. It is not necessary for a stable society to agree on the most fundamental things or everyone to belong to the same social groupings. It does require that all major groups in the society agree on the rules of the game, the constitution, the way in which disputes are to be processed and policies decided. It also requires responsible action by the leaders of the respective groups, a willingness to accept half a loaf now and then and not to press one's advantage too far. In Fiji, Norton says: "the manipulation of racial loyalties in political action has been restrained by the recognition of the racial division in building social and political structures," and, "Recognition that a struggle for domination would be destructive of all fostered a national endeavour to manage the conflict." (p. 146)

Coexistence is a major political value in Fiji. Race relations are "structured" so that differences and inequalities offset each other rather than reinforce racial cleavages. As Norton puts it: "Indian superiority in commerce . . . is balanced by Fijian control of land, by institutional affirmation of their special honour as a racial group . . ." (p. 147) The electoral system has from its beginning been based upon racial communities, with each group enjoying a number of guaranteed seats in the Parliament, In

the Senate certain seats are reserved for a number of Fijian senators. The Great Council of Chiefs has been continued as holdover from the colonial epoch, and its special mission is to review all policies relevant to the Fijian community.

Race is not the only factor underlying political allegiance in Fiji, Norton points, out. A number of Fijian radicals have found comfort and a home in the predominantly-Indian Federation Party. Conversely, a number of important Indians are in the Alliance Party. Class and regional differences also form the bases of political differences. The northwest and southwest regions are economically and historically different, and these differences have political and economic implications, Norton tells us. As Fijians change their residential locale and enter more and more into the professions, and as Indians exert more pressure for Fijian lands and jobs in the government service, a traditional preserve of the Fijians, class divisions may emerge which will override traditional Fijian loyalties and concerns. Norton shows how the political appeals of the Federation Party have been directed at Fijian economic interest. Its Indian leadership has attempted to create class feelings and drive a wedge between the Fijians and their chiefs, traditionally holders of political power in the Fijian community. It can so be pointed out that the cleavages within the Indian community, cleavages of origin in India, linguistic and religious cleavages, occupational cleavages, and so forth, have prevented the Indians from presenting a united front in Fijian politics. The Federation Party is a faction-ridden, quarrelsome alliance of competing groups. The Fijians, on the other hand, have generally been loyal to their chiefs and their traditions. They have made common cause with the Europeans because they have need of allies against the Indian majority. The history of Fijian-British relations has not always been one of undivided loyalty and affection, although there has been plenty of that evident. The Fijians were politically quiescent until aroused by the British who themselves, sixty years ago, began to feel threatened by the growing Indian population and its militancy, There were among the Fijians, up through the 1930s, those who generally opposed the policies of the colonial government, among them Ratu Sukuna, perhaps the most distinguished Fijian leader of the past century. After the war, however, Ratu Sukuna joined his Fijian colleagues in support of official policies. The Fijians had turned to the British and affirmed their loyalty to them as the guardians of Fijian interests.

Norton hesitates, very wisely, to hazard any prophecies for the future political stability of Fiji. The social situation may be against it, but, as he argues, communal contentions may be regularized and accommodated by the political process. Some nations have succeeded in doing this, others have not. For the sake of the people of Fiji we must hope that the founda-

tion established by the current generation of political leadership is grounded in bedrock.

Jerry K. Loveland
Director, The Institute for Polynesian Studies
Brigham Young University--Hawaii Campus