

Remarks at NFP Golden Jubilee Dinner
7.30pm – Saturday December 07, 2013
Hotel San Bruno- Nadi
By NFP National Youth Steering Committee Representative
Ravikant Singh

{SALUTATIONS}

Greetings from the NFP Youth. 50 years is a short time in the life of a human being. But 50 years is a very long time in the life of a political party, especially in a country of less than a million people.

The National Federation Party is the oldest and longest-serving Party in Fiji. And the youth associated with the NFP should be proud that its great leaders including its founder leader Ambalal Dahyabhai Patel were youthful when they started their political career.

The late A D Patel was only 39 years of age when he successfully contested the elections and won his seat in 1944. Of course this was 19 years before the birth of NFP.

Mr Patel's able lieutenant who later became his successor as NFP and Opposition Leader, Mr Siddiq Koya, entered the Legislative Council in 1963 at the age of 39.

My Koya's successor and Fiji's longest serving Leader of the Opposition Honourable Justice Jai Ram Reddy was only 35 years old when he was appointed to the Senate in 1972 as the nominee of Mr Koya and at the age of 40 became the Opposition Leader after September 1977.

Mr Harish Sharma, who served as NFP's Leader and Deputy Leader, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister in the NFP/FLP Coalition Government in 1987 was only 38 when he was appointed as a Senator in 1970.

Of course there are others who rose to prominence either as MPs, Senators, Mayors or Town and City Councillors from within the ranks of NFP. But the fact is that the NFP record of inducting youth leaders in public life and in politics remains unparalleled.

This, ladies and gentlemen, speaks volumes about NFP's commitment to ensuring the constructive and credible involvement of youth in politics.

But like our predecessors, those of us aspiring for political recognition must remember that this will not be handed to us on a silver platter. All of us have to earn our stripes to seek recognition and confidence of our leaders. As youth, we cannot afford to criticize from afar and resort to maligning seasoned politicians in our bid for equal status. Now more than ever before we need the guidance of our seniors.

To gain this recognition and earn the respect we have to play our role in appraising ourselves with the political realities on the national landscape, and in turn inculcating this in our fellow youth as well as the people.

I believe that as responsible citizens, we should be concerned about events unfolding around us. Failure to do so will only set the foundation for a bleak future for the present and future generations.

The painful reality is that we do not know what the future holds for us as we wake up each morning. We may appear to be full of joy and happiness but are we genuinely happy?

Are we certain about what the future holds for us and our children? Are we sure that tomorrow's sunrise will bring us a brighter day? full of hope?

Fiji today needs leaders who are bold, honest and have the ability and credibility to tackle our many problems. We need men and women who can provide sound and sensible leadership, not those who believe they can manipulate us with false promises.

We must be careful because for far too long we have allowed ourselves to be fooled by self serving leaders who promised much but have failed terribly in delivery.

And in believing these leaders, we allowed them to betray the trust and faith that we had placed in them to deliver to us better housing, better roads, regular water supply, control on price of food, quality health care, affordable education, reviving our sugar industry, resolving the land lease problem and creating employment opportunities. Those problems that our leaders had promised to resolve have increased to an extent that we are now being suffocated.

I believe the time has now come for all of us to stand up and be counted. We should no longer allow ourselves to be fooled by anyone who makes empty promises.

We must start learning to differentiate the truth from lies. We must start to compare issues with reality, critically analyse and make informed decisions with a clear frame of mind rather than letting emotions dictate our conscience.

This is the greatest challenge facing all of us today and together we must overcome this challenge for the sake of our youth.

Thank you and God Bless NFP.