

A Party of vision

The following opinion are excerpts of a speech delivered by lawyer Tupou Draunidalo at the National Federation Party's 50th anniversary celebrations on 7th December 2013.

It is another great honour for me to speak at a party function, especially one commemorating 50 years of service to Fiji. NFP, the party of Messrs A D Patel, S M Koya, Jai Ram Reddy, Balwant Singh Rakka and Harish Sharma

Introduction

As is well known and as recorded, the National Federation Party (NFP) is the oldest political party in Fiji. The party was born five decades ago out of the struggle of the people of the then colonial Fiji for dignity and respect. The late Mr. A D Patel and his followers formally launched NFP as a multiracial party in 1963.

Objects

The principal objectives of the party have been, are and will remain as follows: -

- *To create, promote, foster and preserve a sense of*

national consciousness among the citizens of Fiji, irrespective of any distinction of community, religion, race or sex;

- *To promote, preserve and safeguard the political, economic and social rights of the citizens of Fiji, irrespective of any distinction of community, religion, race or sex;*

- *To strive to bring about political, economic, social and cultural integration among the citizens of Fiji by pursuing the ideal of seeking “Unity in Diversity”, and by creating an atmosphere of goodwill, understanding and mutual respect for the culture and religion of all classes of citizens;*

These objectives are timeless and remain as true today as they did when the party was founded. Throughout its political life, working for the national interest the party has retained these objectives as its guiding principles. While for much of its existence NFP has led the “opposition” in Fiji’s Westminster experience it has nevertheless promoted and supported social justice policies that were in the national interest and that conformed with the party’s objects.

Achievements

Some of the game changing and permanent achievements which the NFP was instrumental in bringing to fruition are: -

- Establishment of Fiji National Provident Fund for the workers of Fiji;
- Establishment of Housing Authority for the ordinary and average working class citizens of Fiji;
- Enactment of Agricultural Landlord & Tenant Ordinance (ALTO in 1966) and Agricultural Landlord & Tenant Act (ALTA) in 1976 to provide long term stability and security to cane growers and agricultural tenants on leased native, state and freehold land;
- Negotiating the Denning Award and lead the struggle for the departure of Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), bringing prosperity to canegrowers and Fiji's sugar industry for many decades;
- Peaceful achievement of Fiji's Independence under the 1970 Constitution;
- Establishment of the Constitution Review

Commission (Sir Paul Reeves led Commission) for the review of the racist and feudalistic 1990 Constitution;

- Successful promulgation of the universally acclaimed 1997 Constitution.

Inclusivity

Ladies, and gentlemen, the NFP has thus been a **steady ship** with visionary members and leaders through exciting and sometimes turbulent waters over the last fifty years. At the beginning I mentioned the names of the leaders of this party. This party has also been the party working towards the empowerment of women. The membership and contribution of the women's wing is testament to this. Mrs. Jai Narayan was a pioneer woman politician in the 60s and deputy leader of this party and Adi Kuini Vuikaba also received the support of this party to lead the NFP-Labour Coalition in 1990/91.

I, a youngish woman lawyer have been encouraged through the last decade by the party to take a more active part in the party.

Other prominent and professional women of substance

with their own achievements have supported and contributed to this party in the last fifty years.

That is no mean feat in our very conservative and male dominated society.

Additionally, in our country that has had and has its complexities with regard to race relations – it is comforting to note that the NFP with its base predominantly in what was the Indo Fijian community – has had more than its fair share of members from the indigenous community. And as is normal for this political party, top quality members at that.

The NFP members of both houses of Parliament from the indigenous community include, Apisai Tora, Isikeli Nadalo, Atunaisa Maitoga, Ratu Glaniville Lalabalavu, Ratu Mosese Tuisawau, Ro Asela Logavatu, Timoci Naco, Sakeo Tuiwainikai, Ratu Jullian Toganivalu, Koresi Matatolu, Ratu Osea Gavidu, Ratu Napolioni Dawai II, Ratu Soso Katonivere, Filimone Nalatu and Temo Sukanaivalu.

Their names can tell their own stories. That sample traverses the breadth of the indigenous community, the chiefs, the activists, the educated, the professionals and the members of the community at large.

The NFP has also been the party of lawyers. The great Nelson Mandela was a proud lawyer. We can see that

his training in the law and justice carried him in very many if not everything that he did. That should be a lesson to the lawyers of Fiji who are members of this party and I encourage them to follow suit.

Conclusion

Going forward, the NFP should cultivate and work hard to ensure that its proud history of inclusivity, vision and steady hand endures to help Fiji back to parliamentary democracy.

I am confident that the NFP and its leadership being what it is will not fall into the fads and fashion of the times but will carry on as it has always done – calm voice of reason amidst the noise and clamour – for the long term good of our home, Fiji.