

THE Fiji Times

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Think before you speak

WE ARE grateful for the attempt by Senator Bole to satisfy us that Fiji's senators are a hardworking and productive group of unelected people. When he attacked this newspaper in the Senate on Tuesday he gave what he called a brief explanation of how the Senate continued working after its 20-minute sitting. This, he said, took the form of informal sessions. He hoped this would satisfy *The Fiji Times*.

His hope is in vain. While there may be some interaction among senators in informal meetings — over lunch perhaps — he has yet to show that the Senate did a fair day's work.

He was at pains to point out that *The Fiji Times* is foreign-owned. That, at least, is true.

He was joined yesterday by Ratu Finau Mara who couldn't wait to display his ignorance of the difference between the sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the Senate. He said: 'Whether they meet for 10 minutes or whether they meet for 10 hours, that is the sovereignty of a country which has its own Senate. This is the only body in a country which makes laws for the whole country and whether they meet for one hour or whether it goes through the night until 3 o'clock, that is its own privilege.'

In other words the public can like it or lump it — as long as they pay for it. But Ratu Finau didn't stop there. He took up from where Senator Bole left off by attacking the *Fiji Times* ownership. He ended a rambling statement with the observation that the shareholding of the company should 'reflect the type of news that the cross-section of the people in the country want to hear.'

No doubt Ratu Finau considers himself the best judge of what that type of news is. That being so, he should found a newspaper and make his shareholders rich. However, on past experience, he and his colleagues are far more likely to confine themselves to talk. Action is not their strong point.

What both men overlook is that this particular foreign-owned com-

Continued overleaf

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK*From previous page*

pany employs nearly 300 of Fiji's citizens (though none command the hourly rate of the good senators), it pays taxes in this country, buys goods and services in this country. Of its 280-plus employees only two are expatriates. It retains all of its profits here in Fiji. It has not ripped off the National Bank of Fiji as others may have.

What they also overlook is the effect this kind of babble has on potential investors. Nobody will be in a hurry to invest in this country while people like Senator Bole and Ratu Finau make veiled threats on ownership. They need to learn to think before they speak.

□ *Editorial in The Fiji Times on 2 October 1997.*



**Small
World**

TELEVISION

online at

www.smallworld.co.nz