

ASSIGNMENT IN FIJI

"I NOTICED some interesting changes in the Suva scene since my previous visit there two and a half years ago. Several big new buildings have been built, among them the new Broadcasting House, costing £73,000. It was finished two years ago, but has already proved inadequate, and is having additions costing £11,500 made to it." The man with the facts and figures about Fijian broadcasting at his finger-tips was Len. J. Greenberg, Secretary of the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, who recently visited the Colony to make a report for the Fiji Broadcasting Commission. Though there is no official connections between the Fijian broadcasting body and the NZBS, there are strong personal ties, as eight senior officers, including the Manager, K. G. Collins, were seconded from the NZBS.

"Within two years," Mr. Greenberg said, "the Fiji Broadcasting Commission has developed from practically nothing into a unit with 33 people on its Suva staff, operating 110 hours weekly on three (soon to be four) transmitters. The Commission is building a new relay station at Lautoka, on the north-west coast of Viti Levu (the main island), which will greatly increase its coverage, and Radio licences have increased from 3288 in June, 1954, to 11,499 this year."

In a difficult and complex community of three main races, Fijian, Indian and British, the Commission has established a tri-lingual, part commercially-sponsored Service. Listeners can hear the major recorded feature programmes familiar to English, Australian and New Zealand listeners. Advertising revenue is healthy in spite of (or because of) the fact that no advertisement exceeds 50 words. Cultural standards are high and light entertainment is both varied and generously provided.

"It's quite an experience visiting Fiji," Mr. Greenberg commented, "whether you go on holiday or on business. A relaxed holiday beside blue lagoons is not necessarily found in

Suva itself, and there are times of the year when the climate makes the daily round more difficult than in New Zealand. However, the majority of the New Zealand staff have elected to remain for a second term, and from what I saw of them, they're certainly looking well and enjoying their stay.

"For anyone interested in people, the Fijian scene is a fascinating one," Mr. Greenberg said. "The Fijians—there are about 147,000 of them—are naturally the most at home in an environment of beautiful white sands, coral reefs and blue sea, coconut palms and colourful hibiscus. Altogether, their life is pretty leisurely. However, they are outnumbered by the Indians, 166,000 odd, who are enterprising in their ways. They are mainly Hindus, with about 10 per cent of Moslems. The Indian in Fiji dates back to 1877, when Indian labour was introduced under indenture for the sugar industry. The indentures were cancelled in 1920, and were followed by free immigration. This, with natural increase, has made the Indian predominant and he figures largely in commerce, trade and agriculture. The Indian has also acquired the mechanical skills, unlike the Fijian, whose roots are in the land and who prefers domestic crafts. When you stroll through an area like an Indian bazaar, breathing the smells of curry and chutney, seeing women in saris and Sikhs in turbans, you can quite easily imagine yourself to be in Asia. The Indians are capturing much of the scene even on the European side. The Europeans and part-Europeans

represent just under 18,000 of the population. They are the leaders in many phases of life, while the Chinese, who are more influential than their numbers suggest, run to no more than 5000. The political implications of all this are interesting and important."

Although Mr. Greenberg had some critical comments to offer, he was able to report favourably to the Fiji Broadcasting Commission on most aspects of its work. The FBC's Chairman, incidentally, is R. L. Munro, a leading Suva lawyer, and a brother of Sir Leslie Munro, New Zealand's Ambassador in Washington.

"The Fiji Broadcasting Commission is not located up some back alley. It doesn't operate with a few squeaking recordings and spoken features which have long since passed their prime. The Service in Fiji is making a modern approach to the business of broadcasting," was Mr. Greenberg's summing up of his impressions.



★ BROADCASTING HOUSE, Suva, headquarters of the FBC. Additions costing £11,500 are to be made. ★



Spencer Digby photograph
LEN J. GREENBERG, Secretary of the NZBS



ABOVE: This group of youngsters may well produce the Fijian leaders of tomorrow. RIGHT: Indian children in Suva record a programme for broadcasting