

September 21, 2015

The Editor

Fiji Sun

Suva

Jytoi Prabhas's article in the Fiji Sun titled "Unions Overseas Rant exposed" (F/S 18/9) is misleading as well as mischievous. Let me clarify that this was not the first time I expressed concern on the non restoration of Trade Union Rights.

I have said this at numerous forums locally including the Annual General Meeting of the Union in May 2015. The only difference is that the media did not care to publicize them. We had also sent to the media copies of resolutions on all matters of concern we had submitted to the Ministry. The bullying tactic of the Ministry was clearly demonstrated when it threatened to withdraw the check off system for the social security contribution of the members of the sister Union when a statement was made by the Union against the Education Ministers leadership style. The Union had to apologize to him publicly because it was held at ransom

Reduction of the ENTRY POINT salary of teachers with Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees from \$16000, \$18000 and \$23000 respectively to \$12,360 in 2015 is a fact .This is in clear breach of the Job Evaluation Agreement signed by the parties in 1998. In response to the Ministers statement earlier in the year that "these teachers do not have any experience and have to be tested for a year" I had stated on FBC TV that the teachers have graduated after satisfactorily completing their courses including 6 months of practical attachment. The Minister's rhetoric that MOE has provided employment to those without jobs is baseless. The fact is that MOE has exploited these teachers who were in search of jobs. Having two sets of salaries for the same job is exploitation and against labor laws.

I had further stated that several Ministers neither possess relevant qualification nor experience. Perhaps they need to be put on probation at a lower salary.

It is high time the Ministry engages with all the stakeholders it has distanced itself from, restores all structures of consultation and gives due recognition to the Unions as legitimate representatives of their members.

The Government needs to honor the MOU it signed in Geneva and totally restore the rights of workers in the country.

The faith of my members in my leadership is demonstrated by the steady increase in membership in the last decade despite the cessation of check off system. The membership of FTU is almost the same as the total number of votes Hon Reddy received in the last election.

Yes Jyoti, I am pragmatic and level headed. I have left no stone unturned to seek dialogue with the Ministry. Numerous letters remain unanswered. What else do you expect?

Yours sincerely,

Agni Deo Singh

GENERAL SECRETARY