



# FIJI TEACHERS UNION

## NEWSLETTER

*(The Child Our Hope)*

NOVEMBER 2015

Published by the  
Fiji Teachers Union

Vol. 86 No. 3  
Editor: Bro. Manhar Kumar

### GREETINGS

Warm greetings to all our valued members! As we come close to the academic year 2015, we present to you the following updates:

#### EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS PROMULGATION [AMENDED] 2007

**Whilst** the amended ERP provides an opportunity to individuals and the Union to register disputes, the ERP does not fully comply with the Core ILO Conventions.

The Essential Industries remain the same as ENI Decree. It is difficult to comprehend as to how a “stop work” in the Pine Industry or the Banking Industry threatens anyone’s safety, health or life.

The Bargaining Unit is also in the ERP amended and continues to exist like Unions.

The **Right to Strike** – the “essential workers” do not have the right to strike. The Right to Strike is a worker’s fundamental right under the ILO Convention 87.

**The “right to strike” does not mean that Unions want to go on strike willy nilly, as some believe and also want others to believe.**

It is a fundamental right that can be exercised as and when necessary. And of course, notice has to be given. Unions and Employers are to adhere to certain procedures. The ILO has given the Government till March 2016 to amend the Labour Laws and comply with the Conventions as cited by the Committee of Experts. The FTUC is applauded for pursuing the case relentlessly, to ensure that all the rights of workers are restored.

#### FTC JOINT OPENING – 2016 CONFERENCE

The Fiji Teachers Union and Fijian Teachers Association [FTC] have agreed a joint opening for the 2016 Annual General Meeting and Conference. The joint opening will be held at the National Gymnasium, Suva.

After the joint opening, FTU will have its AGM. The venue will be announced later.

#### 2016 BUDGET

The Education Ministry has received a total of \$432.2 million.

In 2016, 350 more teachers are expected to be recruited – 250 for primary and 100 for secondary schools. The Teacher / Pupil ratio is expected to improve to 1:30 and 1:35 respectively for Primary and Secondary schools.

#### FTU POSITION

Members would recall that FTU had been calling upon the MoE to re-look at the T/P ratio and employ more teachers, thus reducing the T/P ratio for effective teaching and learning.

#### ENTRY POINT – NEW RECRUITS

The Union noted with deep concern that teachers recruited in 2015 were put on ED 9A salary of \$12,360.00. The Union wrote to the Minister and Education Ministry that putting teachers on ED 9A salary was grossly unfair, demeaning and against the 1993 JEE Agreement.

The Union had further pointed out that ED9A salary was making the teaching profession undesirable

and the huge reduction in the salary was de-professionalizing the teaching profession and that ED9A salary would never attract quality and talented individuals to the teacher training institutions.

The Union is glad the Minister finally realized that teachers must be paid the correct salary. In 2016, teachers will be placed on their correct entry points. The Union has filed a dispute with the Labour Ministry to ensure that those teachers who were not paid their correct salary be compensated.

### POST PROCESSING

The Union has been receiving numerous complaints from members regarding post processing. The Union is ready to assist members with regards to complaints on post processing. Members are urged to notify the HQ in writing about their grievances.

**Members must note that the Union position is that all vacant positions must be processed based on the advertised MQR.**

### FTC WORKSHOP – 3 DAYS

A 3 day FTC workshop, for elected Executive Members, is scheduled to take place in the first week of the Term 3 holidays at the FTU Hall.

The theme for the workshop is: "Promoting Trade Union and Human Rights for All."

### INDIVIDUAL GRIEVANCES

Under the ERP [Amended] 2007, individual employees have the right to file grievances with the Registrar, Mediation Services -Ministry of Labour.

The Union had noted that the Ministry of Education did not notify "unsuccessful candidates" nor did it send the "regret letters subsequent to processing post"

When this was raised with the Ministry of Labour as a dispute, the Education Ministry, via an email on 4th November, 2015, sent emails to all schools – attaching the letter of Dr. Mahendra Reddy, which read:

"To ensure everyone gets fair chance of being

promoted, we had developed a promotions matrix which takes into account the following:

1. No. of years of service.
2. No. of years of rural service.
3. Current Grade.
4. Qualifications.
5. Commendation points for special achievements or contributions.
6. Performance [for this year everyone is given full points].
7. HR Issues [negative points].

For a position, based on the above, each candidate gets points leading the total points. The candidate with the highest points gets confirmed to the position."

The Minister's email also attempted to discourage members from seeking Union assistance to file individual grievances. This again is in breach of the ERP which clearly stipulates the right to representation. If a member wishes to file an individual grievance as an unsuccessful applicant for a post, the Union will facilitate the submission and ensure that the dispute mechanism determines a fair outcome. Members will note that the Union stands for fair and transparent decisions based on merit. It is not about supporting one member against another.

Aggrieved members can fill in the ER 1 Form, and lodge the same with Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Productivity. Forms can be downloaded from Ministry of Labour , Industrial Relations and Productivity

**Website. <http://www.labour.gov.fj/forms.htm>**

### TRADE DISPUTE

The Union has filed a dispute with the Arbitration Court. The employment dispute is in regards to the unreasonable deduction of salary pertaining to the entry point of teachers employed in 2015 and the discrimination in the rates of pay in respect to teachers employed by the Ministry of Education.

### 2015 LOG OF CLAIMS

The Union had submitted the following Log of

Claims with the Ministry of Education in July 2015. A copy of the same was submitted to the Minister of Finance in October due to the failure of MoE to respond. The Hon Minister of Finance has responded stating the Government's willingness to discuss the Log of Claims. We hope to engage in negotiations in the near future.

1. A 5% salary increase for all grades wef 1/1/2015.
2. Provision for 7% salary increase for all grades wef 1/1/2016.
3. Reinstatement of the entry points to ED 8A and ED 8G.
4. Consultation on Annual Appraisal as the basis of merit increase.
5. Reinstatement of the Executive Teacher positions that were reduced as a cost cutting measure in 2010.
6. Reinstatement of Counselor positions in ED 1 schools.
7. A Job Evaluation Exercise for the teaching service to be carried out.

### **COMPENSATION-SATURDAY/AFTERNOON CLASSES**

The Union has written [10/11] to the Permanent Secretary that teachers be compensated for taking Saturday and afternoon classes as per MoE directive via Circular 30/15.

A dispute would be lodged with Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations if the Ministry fails to discuss the issue with the Union.

### **CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION CIRCULAR NO.46/45**

The Ministry had sent a Circular to all schools asking teachers not to go to the Unions to seek assistance. The Union wrote to the PS Ministry of Education stating that it was the fundamental right of a worker who is a member of a Union to seek assistance from the Union. This is guaranteed under the ERP 2007 and the 2013 Constitution. The PS has finally responded on 16th November stating that teachers are encouraged to first raise their grievances with the MoE before seeking Union assistance.

### **SPORTS TOURNAMENTS - SOUTHERN/WESTERN**

The western branches had their sports tournament on the 7th of November 2015 at the Xavier College Ground. The event was a fun-filled one with many members coming in to support and enjoy the day with family and friends.

The southern zone tournament was scheduled for 14th of November, 2015 hosted by Rewa Branch at Pt Shreedhar Maharaj College Ground in Wainibokasi, Nausori.

We thank the members and the branches for coming together and organizing and participating in these tournaments.

### **OFFICE CLOSURE**

Members are advised that the FTU office will be closed for business from 23/12/15 to 10/1/16. It will re-open for business on Monday 11th January, 2016. Please do make prior arrangements for any business relating to union matters before the closure of office. In cases of emergency the contacts are:

- » **Individual Grievance – 9928096**
- » **Medical Insurance – 9992161/9449457**

### **MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY HOLIDAYS**

We take this opportunity to wish each and every member a well-deserved holiday. Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

*Enjoy your holidays responsibly.*







*GS with Taveuni Members*



*President Kicking off Western Soccer*



*Western Tournament Soccer Winner - Lautoka*



*Suva - Southern Soccer/Mens Volleyball Winner*



*Navua - Southern Womens Volleyball Winner*



*Stallion - Western Tournament*