



## **FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS**

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### **FTUC RELEASE NO: 39-26/12**

#### **Road Workers' Despair**

Government has once again abdicated its responsibility to the people of Fiji by announcing that more than a thousand road workers will be made redundant before Christmas. About 700 workers will be given a redundancy pay of 1 week per year of service while the others will be paid absolutely nothing.

This is a devastating blow for these poor workers and their families. These are workers who barely earn enough to simply survive from one week to another, not even being able to make ends meet. This is even more tragic when we have experienced very high increase in costs of living, increased poverty amongst our people and high unemployment in the country.

Recent media reports stated that at the end of last year 9000 graduates from our local institutes remained unemployed. These road workers don't stand a chance. One week wages per year of service for the 700 workers who earn below the poverty line is clearly not sufficient compensation. For those that receive no compensation the struggle starts immediately.

Government has a responsibility to these workers to ensure their livelihood is sufficiently taken care off. It cannot simply act as if it has no responsibility. It also needs to deal with such issues sensitively as these workers and their families will go through immense emotional stress, uncertainty and will have no source of income for their livelihoods.

Here we have an unelected government deciding to contract out work to a foreign owned company without following any rules of transparency, accountability and putting

our people on the streets to fend for themselves. This is the height of irresponsibility. It is no wonder that people demand for an elected government that is accountable to the people. This is just another demonstration of dictatorship with no regard for the people.

The FTUC calls on Government to reconsider its decision to contract out work that would put more than a thousand families out on the streets with no source of income whatsoever. These workers deserve better and government must impose on any contractor that these workers be given work or it negotiates with the relevant Unions a fair compensation and considers other initiatives to retrain these workers to improve their chances of obtaining employment or self-employment.

It is not sufficient to leave this matter to the new contractor to decide. Government has to act on this matter with a sense of responsibility and fairness.



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