



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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Regime Seeks Publicity for Dues Owed

The FTUC is surprised that the Labour Minister, Jone Usamate is showcasing his Ministry as being proactive and delivering to workers of Fiji. The truth is that these payouts for workers' deaths have been delayed for three or more years and Government as the employer in these cases needs to explain why the grieved families of workers were made to wait so long by Government to pay workmen's compensation.

The publicity that the Ministry seeks in making these payments is ill deserved and is simply another election campaign by the regime. The fact is and the regime itself acknowledges this is that the workmen's compensation laws are well outdated and a \$25,000 compensation for loss of workers' lives is grossly insufficient for the families affected to sustain a decent living let alone the loss of breadwinners and in many cases the heads of the families.

No investigations and remedial actions have been carried out on the deaths of these workers. Another tragic example is the case of the FSC worker Samuela Sigatokacake who died after suffering from extensive burns in Lautoka Sugar Mill last year. The matter was reported to the Ministry of Labour and the Police for criminal negligence by the employer. No action has been taken by the Ministry or the Police simply because FSC is a government-owned entity and the PM being the Minister responsible. The PM and the Ministry of Labour put on a great show of concern when the death occurred but soon forgot about the tragedy that could have been avoided. Thus it was evident that the grief shown over Mr Sigatokacake's fatal accident was "all for show". To date the Ministry has not made public the cause of the accident and why the pressure vessel that collapsed and fatally burned the worker was certified by the Ministry to operate. The Ministry and the Police have again gone mum on the issue as they have

done with so many others. Yet it seeks recognition for compensation payments that workers by law are entitled to. We demand the Minister explains the delay in payments to the workers' families.

FTUC calls on the Minister to tell the Country how many workmen's compensation cases remain pending and for how long. Much more efficiency and impartiality is required from the Ministry. The FTUC calls on the Minister to release the report on the deaths of all workers for public scrutiny without delay and respond with appropriate action.

There is a need to ensure that there is no repetition of similar tragedies in the future for the sake of the workers and the destitute families they leave behind.



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