



## FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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### **PRESS RELEASE No. 61-03-14**

#### **Usamate Attempts to Hoodwink Workers**

It is ironic that the Minister for Labour, Jone Usamate should call on workers to know their rights when his own very government has stripped majority of workers' rights at work while the remainder remains seriously intimidated to even report any breach of law. Enforcement by his Ministry is at best poor and this fact has been raised with the Ministry consistently over the years. We see no improvement.

The Minister seems to be gloating about his \$2 an hour minimum wage which puts the worker in the extreme poverty category. In fact, the minimum wage set by the previous Wages Council was much higher than the \$2 minimum wage set by this government in all industries except Garment. The minimum wages set for 2012 were as follows:

<b>Industry</b>	<b>NMW</b>
Building	\$3.03
Manufacturing	\$3.02
Wholesale & Retail	\$2.97
Saw milling	\$3.49
Road Transport	\$2.46
Garment	\$2.15
Printing	\$2.61
Security	\$2.41
Hotel & Catering	\$2.73
Mining & Quarrying	\$2.68

To set the minimum wage below the above levels only serves to bring wage levels down. Employers tend to follow the very minimum. Even when negotiating, employers' positions will be based on the legal minimums just as we have seen in case of redundancies.

This Minister and his Ministry failed miserably to even enforce the Wages Council Orders and is falsely championing workers' rights to enforce lesser minimum wage. The Minister needs to live in the real world and try to live on the same \$2 an hour wage before attempting to campaign for the rights of

workers. Basically the Regime is telling workers that it is their right to work and earn extreme poverty wages. There is no dignity in such a minimum wage and such wage rates do not constitute decent work.

The workers have had enough of this so-called government's policy on worker's rights. Majority of workers have no rights with the imposition of the civil service decrees, ENI decrees, POAD, Political Parties Decrees and various other decrees. The Minister knows this well yet he attempts to hoodwink workers into thinking that their rights exist. Such attempts to mislead the nation have become the hallmark of this Regime. The workers will respond come September.



FELIX ANTHONY

**NATIONAL SECRETARY**

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