



## FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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#### Trade Unions and Politics

The media particularly the Fiji Sun and the FBC are forever focused on the involvement of trade unions in politics. Clearly there appears to be a political agenda by these two media outlets based on their recent biased reports on union activities.

The question that these media outlets are not asking is; how is it that Trade Unionists and employees of trade unions are Public Officers? Trade Unionists, Officers of and employees of Trade Unions are not paid by taxpayers' funds. Trade Unions are membership-based organisations and are funded by these members who determine what issues they face and how the Unions need to address them. Constitutions are in place in each of these unions and clearly states their objectives and principles. Decisions are taken in a democratic fashion and Officers of the Trade Unions are entrusted to carry out those decisions. There is no justification for the classification of Unionists as "public officers" or for any interference by the regime.

The Political Parties Registration Decree classifies Trade Unionists, Officers and their Employees as Public Officers while it states that the PM and his Cabinet Ministers are not Public Officers, despite being paid by taxpayers. This is outrageously unfair and unjust yet it does not seem to interest the media. This Decree is an unfair imposition of law clearly to advantage and boost the motives of the current regime. The excuse given to deny Trade Unions and its Officers political rights was to level the playing field as Trades Unions had an unfair advantage. The next logical question that these media outlets need to ask is, how is there going to be a level playing field if the Prime Minister and his Cabinet are free to use taxpayers funds to openly campaign for the PM's yet to be formed political party? We are aware that senior civil servants are being used to campaign and promote this "invisible" party with government resources. Every day the Fiji Sun reports on the Prime Minister promoting his political party and even shamelessly supporting it. People are being approached to stand for this invisible party and this is common knowledge except to these two media outlets.

This Decree like other Decrees that curtail or deny human and trade union rights must be opposed by all decent people and not be promoted. These Decrees are in violation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights and ILO Core Conventions which Fiji is obligated to respect. Any government must be taken to task if they conduct themselves in such an irresponsible manner.

Here in Fiji it is quite the opposite. These two media outlets actually assist this Regime to perpetuate the violation of our human rights and attempt to force such injustices on people such as trade unionist and those associated with them. Some of their reporters openly declare their support for the Regime and make no effort to balance their articles and demonstrate independence. Yet they expect trade unions to remain neutral. Trade Unions can never be neutral as their members' interests and rights are determined by politics.

The FTUC makes no bones about the fact that it cannot support a political party or government that is hell bent on killing the Trade Union movement and deny workers their rights and dignity at work. A pay rise in exchange for rights is not acceptable. Workers rights and Trade Union rights are not for sale for a few pieces of silver. These rights and freedoms have been fought for over decades and many sacrifices have been made to protect these rights. We remain steadfast in our determination to continue this struggle.

The FTUC will continue its campaign for just labour laws that guarantee workers their rights including just wage and terms and conditions of work. We will continue to stand for the restoration of democracy and human rights. If these actions are considered to be political then so be it. These rights and freedoms are fought by trade unions the world over and we refuse to be cowed by unjust Decrees that attempt to restrict our fundamental freedoms. It was not too long ago when this Regime heaped praise on Nelson Mandela for his courage to fight for the freedom for his people yet at home this same Regime attempts to take our freedom away and threaten us all with jail terms if we continue to fight for our freedoms.

The FTUC calls upon the media outlets to return to fair and unbiased reporting, observe media ethics and develop a backbone to raise and debate critical issues such as democracy, rights and freedoms of our people, open and transparent government and many other issues that the public must know which this Regime is silent on. We call for the complete revocation of all Decrees that infringe or deny our fundamental rights. The regime need not run scared of Trade Unions. Let the people decide.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Felix Anthony', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Felix Anthony**  
**National Secretary**

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