



120 Church Street, Onehunga
Private Bag 92904, Onehunga
Auckland 1643, New Zealand
P 09 622 8355 F 09 622 8353
E contact@firstunion.org.nz
www.firstunion.org.nz

FIRST Union – Individual Universal Periodic Review submission –
Cuba - May 2013

FIRST Union is one of New Zealand's largest private sector trade union organisations representing 27,000 members over 5 different sectors: finance, retail, transport & logistics, textile and wood. FIRST Union was formed in 2011 as an amalgamation of two unions (the National Distribution Union and Finsec) both of which have a long and proud history of unionism in New Zealand with some of the earliest of their contributing unions formed as far back as 1919.

As a union our activities are focused on protecting, fostering and advocating for the rights, employment, pay and living conditions of our members. We also are active participants in the international trade union movement and take seriously our role to support for trade unions and workers worldwide. It is in this capacity that we wish to make a submission to the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on human rights in Cuba.

Please accept the following submission to the May 2013 Universal Periodic Review on Cuba.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Robert Reid'.

Robert Reid
General Secretary
robert.reid@firstunion.org.nz

- 1) We note firstly that Cuba has ratified 88 ILO Conventions that protect and promote the fundamental rights of unions and workers in Cuba and that those rights are also enshrined in the Constitution and included in the Labour Code.
- 2) Cuba is recognised within the international trade union movement as a strong supporter of workers worldwide in their struggles for justice and decent work and we acknowledge the strong and genuine attempts that they have made and continue to be made to improve access to work and the working conditions of Cubans.
- 3) Members of FIRST Union have visited Cuba and have seen first-hand the difficulties faced by Cuban workers due to the political and economic conditions imposed on their country, especially the economic, commercial and financial blockade, imposed on Cuba by the U.S., both directly and in complicity with other nations. Despite the shortages and limitations created by this blockade, we have seen that Cuban workers remain committed and determined in their support of their country and their government. They have the same wish to be able to work and prosper that workers in our own country aspire to. We have seen the political will, efforts and commitment of the Cuban Government to continue elevating the quality of life of all Cubans and to move forwards towards a fairer, freer and more independent society.
- 4) Cuba has been suffering from unfounded accusations and campaigns to discredit its democracy and its performance in human rights. Cuba is a sovereign socialist state of workers, organised with all and for the good of all as a united and democratic republic. It promotes the enjoyment of political freedom, social justice, individual and collective well-being and human solidarity. The Cuban political system is the expression of the will of its people and its main quality is its capacity for constant improvement as necessary to achieve full, genuine and systematic participation by the people in leading and directing society.

- 5) The Cuban government has begun a programme of economic and social change to “update their economic model” with the aim of advancing and improving living conditions, equity and productivity and to address the difficulties that have been intensified by the global economic crisis.
- 6) The opportunity to open businesses, to enter into new areas of commerce and to help develop Cuba’s economy is being promoted and encouraged. There are plans to develop tourism, power generation, conservation of soil, water etc and to increase food production among just a few.
- 7) It is to Cuba’s credit that these changes are being made and promoted. They are changes which allow Cubans to be innovative and to open and develop their own businesses. At the same time the state is also continuing to provide basic support in housing and food and still providing a high level education and a healthcare system of universal coverage.
- 8) It reflects very badly upon other nations if Cuba’s very real efforts to advance even more the freedoms and rights of its workers, is impeded by any nation’s refusal to allow Cuba to participate fully in the economic, political and social international market.
- 9) We applaud the changes that Cuba is making in the interests of realising a strong and prosperous economy and employment opportunities for the Cuban people.