

October 4, 2012

**Unite Union - Individual Universal Periodic Review submission –
Cuba – April/May 2013**

Unite is a union with often low paid members working in hotels, restaurants, casinos, cinemas, call centres, security, malls and language schools. We are a democratic, non-profit organisation committed to improving the working and living conditions of the lowest paid workers in the New Zealand workplace.

Unite also has strong links with unions throughout the world, and an interest in seeing workers gain better access to their rights and better pay and conditions everywhere. Many of the companies we deal with are multi-national, such as fast food restaurants, so we recognise the importance of working people also working together across nationalities to fight for our rights.

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

Kind regards,



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1. We welcome the opportunity to make a submission on human rights in Cuba during this cycle of the Universal Periodic Review.
2. Our members in New Zealand struggle to make ends meet on low wages, and rely very much on public provision of core services to ensure the health and wellbeing of themselves and their families. We would like to make special mention of the universal nature of public services in Cuba, and how important that is for workers on low pay.
3. Rights to free, quality healthcare and free, quality education including university education are essential to ensuring that citizens are able to access all their other rights guaranteed under law. By prioritising all people's access to these services, and despite the negative impact of the US blockade, Cuba provides a model that many other countries could emulate. Low incomes in Cuba do not have the same grievous impact on workers and their families that they do in many other parts of the world and Cuba's policy of making sure that sufficient food and shelter is made available to all of its citizens ensures that homelessness and malnutrition do not exist.
4. We are also aware that Cuba has adopted new policies involving the transfer of land to those working it as well as to expanding and building on the programmes it already has in place to increase food production by promoting "green" methods in cultivation and water conservation. Agricultural co-operatives are also an important means of putting the production of food and its control into the hands of working people and their communities and also of increasing their skills.
5. Unite members have visited special schools in Cuba, such as one for the vision impaired, that do not have modern equipment, but do have very small classes and produce wonderful results in educating these students. We witnessed programmes and efforts undertaken by the Cuban Government to ensure the quality of life and the protection and full enjoyment of human rights of people with disabilities. We also wish to note the very high level of participation in society, arts and culture, government, health, education and trade sectors that Cuban women enjoy.
6. We understand that Cuba has taken measures to protect against any form of discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation as part of its commitment to making fundamental freedoms available to all of its citizens regardless of their age, sex, disability, political or religious beliefs.
7. Cuba is working on new amendments to be incorporated into its

Criminal Code, Family Code and Labour Code, all of which are focused on increasing freedoms and participation for the Cuban people. Unite Union believes that Cuba demonstrates a commitment to meet the human rights of the most disadvantaged people in society and it is to their credit that they have done so and continue to do so.