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MEDIA RELEASE

NFP WILL REPEAL PARLIAMENTARY REMUNERATIONS DECREE

A National Federation Party Government will repeal the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree and will, through Parliament, establish an independent emoluments commission to look at salaries, perks and privileges of Members of Parliament.

Until the determination is set by a Parliamentary emoluments commission, the salaries of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers will be automatically reduced by 25% from the current exorbitantly high and self-determined salaries done by the Fiji First Government. Similarly, rates of allowances and per diem will be reduced.

The independent emoluments commission will determine the salaries of all public office holders including the President, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Leader of the Opposition and the Speaker. Unlike before there is no relativity of the salaries of office holders to those of the Leader of the Opposition and Members of Parliament.

It must be recalled that the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree was promulgated by the Fiji First Government on 3rd October 2014, 3 days before the resumption of parliamentary democracy. This basically means that the Fiji First Government prescribed for themselves what their salaries should be!

Furthermore, while paying themselves exorbitant salaries, Government is stifling resources and funding for the Opposition. Worse of all, the weekly salary and allowances of the Prime Minister is manifestly more than what an ordinary worker would earn in a year on the meagre minimum wage rate of \$2.32 an hour.

The Attorney General and Minister for Economy's excuse that large salaries for Government Ministers avoids corruption is pathetic and self-serving. He conveniently sidestepped the issue that was raised by students during his Budget consultation who probably know much better.

There continues to be one rule for Government Ministers and one rule for everybody else. The lower ranks of public servants are under intense scrutiny through anti-corruption laws and FICAC (Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption).

All correspondence should be addressed to the general secretary

Against this backdrop the Attorney General justifies payment of unilaterally imposed large salaries for Government Ministers under the pretext of preventing them from being tempted into corruption.

On 29th September last year, parliamentarians voted for themselves, the PM and Cabinet Ministers, a massive increase in allowances and per diem. Only the NFP voted against it and refused to accept the increased allowances or personally benefit from it. Any increased allowances paid to our Members is used for relief assistance. Members of Parliament voting for a monetary increase for themselves based on a report done by themselves breaks every fibre of transparency, accountability and good governance.

The Leader of the Opposition and Opposition MPs have also contributed 10% of their annual salary of \$50,000 towards relief work for TC Winston. The NFP Leader has contributed 50% of his annual salary of \$50,000. There were no such reciprocal measures done by Fiji First Government despite enjoying massive salaries.

The salary levels of the PM and Government Ministers is unprecedented in our history. All except four Cabinet Ministers are earning \$185,000 per annum. Three Ministers are receiving \$200,000 per annum. The salary of the Attorney General is set at \$235,000 annually.

And the Prime Minister is paid \$328,750 per annum. This is a 210% increase from the base salary of the PM in 2006 before the coup. The Prime Minister's overseas travel per diem has increased by 200% from post election levels. If he travels to New Zealand, he will receive almost \$3,000 per night. This is the least amount of per diems that he will receive, if compared against travel to Europe or the United States or Asia.

The people of Fiji need to be reminded that at the time of the coup, Commodore Josaia Voreqe famously claimed no one in his team would profit from the coup. Ten years on, he now pays himself the biggest prime ministerial salary in Fiji's history. This is yet another forgotten and shattered promise on the part of Fiji First.



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