

From 2 To A Better 1

By **Vanessa Teo**

Deputy Executive Secretary of the National Transport Workers' Union Tan Boon Toy played a part in history during the 1980s when SBS Transit Limited opted to switch from "Two Men Operations" to "One Man Operations", where instead of the usual bus driver and conductor on board, only the driver would remain. This had meant a mass retrenchment or re-deployment of the workers. Even though the retrenchment process was painful, Mr Tan recognised that workers would benefit in the long run and, with that in mind, he did his best to help them.

"SBS had a recruitment problem then, and it was also looking at increasing productivity as well. With only one man per bus, productivity would double and the company could benefit in the long run. Once the company did well, workers would then also be able to receive higher bonuses. Therefore my first concern wasn't on how to stop the change but how to help those workers through re-deploying them to other jobs within SBS, or linking them

up with union networks to help the workers change to another industry. Secondly, it was to negotiate for a fair quantum of compensation for the workers. We settled for two weeks per year of service," said Mr Tan.

Mr Tan joined the Labour Movement family in 1977 and served in the then Singapore Industrial Labour Organisation until 1980 when he became the Head of Industrial Relations upon the formation of NTWU. Mr Tan was also deployed to the Singapore Industrial & Services Employees' Union as Deputy Executive Secretary from 1999 to 2003.

"When I was an Industrial Relations Officer with SILO, there were 20 to 30 branches under it and I was involved in different industries, so it was a challenge to cope with the different

expectations from different industries' workers and management.

"After the restructuring that was done so as to address workers needs better, we could concentrate in specific fields, learn more, see things more thoroughly and also analyse problems workers face better, and this helped in building better relations."

At NTWU, Mr Tan was also largely involved in the set up of the SBS Workers' Trust Fund in 1980, and also played a key role in pushing for the

Monthly Variable Component to become part of the flexi-wage system in NTWU's branches. Having spent 32 years with the Labour Movement family, Mr Tan still lives by his belief that IROs must have the heart to serve the workers.

"IROs must change with times, must always expect challenges along the way, and learn new skills. It is also key to maintain good relationships with management and workers and this cannot be done overnight. There is no fixed and fast rule to relationship building, but IROs need to learn bit by bit on the job."

In recognition of his service to workers, Mr Tan was bestowed a National Day Award by President SR Nathan, receiving the Pingat Bakti Masyarakat (Public Service Medal) this year.



Vanessa Teo

ntuc
National Trades Union Congress

Meyer Radiance 32cm Wok Pan with Glass Cover



Special price for
NTUC Members:
\$34.90

(U.P. \$59.90)
Now till 30 Nov 09

Get it today!

Available at FairPrice Xtra outlets –
AMK Hub, Hougang Point and Jurong Point

- 53 Ang Mo Kio Ave 3, #B2-26, AMK Hub, Singapore 569933
Opening Hours: 7am to 10pm (Sun-Thu) 7am to 11pm (Fri-Sat)
- 1 Hougang Street 91, #02-01, Hougang Point, Singapore 538692
Opening Hours: 7am to 10pm (Sun-Thu) 7am to 11pm (Fri-Sat)
- 63 Jurong West Central 3, #03-01, Jurong Point (New Extension), Singapore 648331
Opening Hours: 24 Hours

Terms and Conditions:
• Promotion is only available at FairPrice Xtra outlets – Ang Mo Kio Hub, Hougang Point and Jurong Point.
• NTUC membership card must be presented upon payment to enjoy the offer.
• While stocks last.



U can get more!
Exclusive Member Privileges

