

Leading Selflessly With The Big Picture In Mind



By **S Thiagarajan**

Director, OTC Institute

Some of you probably know the story of the mouse, chicken, pig and turkey living in a barn. In a nutshell it goes something like this: One day the mouse saw the farmer with a mouse trap. Worried, he turned to his barn mates for help. The chicken, pig and turkey shared their sympathy but felt that it was none of their business that the mouse's life was at risk.

That night a snake was caught in the mouse trap. The farmer's wife who came to check the trap was bitten by the snake and fell seriously ill. The chicken was slaughtered to make soup for her, the pig sacrificed to feed well wishers who visited the family and finally the turkey was cooked to celebrate the wife's recovery.

The moral of the story of course is what goes around comes around. It certainly was the case for a colleague who made much effort to get a job for his friend's son-in-law from overseas. Little did he realise that he would be in a similar position sometime later. Needless to say, his son-in-law received the same

kindness and help that he had selflessly given.

Life is a circle. One gets back from life what one puts in. This applies as much for individuals as it does for teams.

In terms of leadership profile, certain trends are evident. Overall, the total number of unionists fell by at least 7 per cent between 2000 and 2008. There are also relatively fewer younger, better educated and women leaders in the fold compared to their numbers in the union membership base and resident workforce. At another level, union presence in some growth sectors of the economy is limited or non-existent. Changes to the status quo may be needed to realise the membership potential of such sectors.

The recent NTUC Ordinary Delegates Conference recognised these trends and urged all unions to build inclusive leadership teams. At the same time, calls were made to review existing union structures where appropriate to position for growth in new and expanding sectors of the economy. Besides inclusiveness and structure, delegates also identified governance of unions and, training and leadership development as key to keeping unions strong and relevant.

No doubt, there will be challenges in meeting some if not all of these goals. Such difficulties should only strengthen the resolve to look for creative and innovative solutions. Examples of unions which have done this successfully were shared at the ODC. Each instance showed individual leaders and leadership teams that acted selflessly keeping the bigger picture in mind for the greater good of members and workers in their sectors.

Leadership is the soul of the organisation. The legacy that individual leaders and leadership teams leave depends on what each is prepared to put in to secure the future. Life is a circle. One gets back from life what one puts in.

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Building Up Better Synergy



By **Tommy Lin**

Senior Consultant, NTUC's Unit for Contract and Casual Workers

Same goals. Same passion. Different roles. Three "Same, Same But Different" units in the Labour Movement came together to build up better synergy in their efforts to lift the lives of workers. Education Services Union, NTUC's Unit for Contract and Casual Workers and NTUC's Care and Share – three units with inter-related work had better insights on these roles at a teambuilding session on 15 November 2009.

Said Miss Andrea Chow, NTUC's UCCW's Assistant Director: "Our activities and courses are tailored largely to cater to the needs of lower-wage workers. Many of the programmes put in place by NTUC's Care and Share will also benefit this group of workers.

"Through the fun and innovative activities at the session, in line with NTUC's UCCW's objective of working closely with unions, other units and Social Enterprises in the Labour Movement family, we were able to build a closer relationship with ESU and NTUC's Care and Share. As we move out of this downturn and steer towards a 'Cheaper Better Faster' economy, shared resources and knowledge are important elements which will double or triple results with the same effort. We look forward to working together with ESU and NTUC's Care and Share to do more good for our contract and casual workers in solidarity."

Many of the Teacher Assistants in the childcare sector that ESU serves are employed on contractual



terms. A deeper insight of the work of UCCW will enable the union to find more ways to help improve these workers' employability through better training, said Mr James Tan, ESU's Deputy Executive Secretary.

"We have worked closely with these departments to leverage on their expertise and resources. Through their good work, ESU has been able to offer more value add to our members. We definitely look forward to even greater collaborative efforts for more high value services and benefits for the members," he said.

The combined teambuilding session was informative for all the three units. Said Madam Teo Boon Lian, NTUC Care and Share's Assistant Director: "The presentations gave each unit an insight into each other's roles and challenges. It will facilitate future collaboration between the three units."