



Singapore Harnesses Strength Of Tripartism



By **Frederick Ho**
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“There are many things in Singapore to be grateful for,” said Mr Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, in his address at the Annual NTUC Gathering for International Labour at the Marina Barrage on 28 October 2009.

Mr Ryder was in Singapore together with some 20 regional union leaders for the 15th ITUC/Asia-Pacific Labour Network meeting in preparation for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders’ Meeting from 14 to 15 November 2009.

He applauded Singapore’s effective use of social partnership, tripartism, to tackle the global crisis and shared that at

the meeting with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on 27 October 2009, Singapore’s premier also supported social dialogue at the international level.

Mr Ryder said the extensive land reclamation efforts in Singapore reminded him of the Netherlands, where much of the land is beneath sea level with dykes holding back the waters. This low-lying, dyke-protected reclaimed land is called “polder” in Dutch. Everyone in the Netherlands have to work together to ensure that the dykes are not breached. The Dutch method of reaching consensus on decision-making has, thus, been termed the “Polder Model”. Mr Ryder likened Singapore’s tripartism to this “Polder Model” as it has been very effective in enabling Singapore to ride out the economic crisis better than most countries.

Before dinner started, our union leaders



Mr Guy Ryder

accompanied attending ambassadors, the APLN participants, and locally based international unionists to tour the Sustainable Singapore Gallery, which showcased our country’s efforts towards environmental sustainability.

NTUC Secretary-General

Lim Swee Say had shared how Singapore managed its water needs and said that this was but one of the many challenges that a small city-state like Singapore faced. He underscored the importance for Singapore to harness the benefit of tripartism to meet the challenges ahead. The presence of Mr Bob Tan, Singapore National Employers Federation Vice-President and officials from the Ministry of Manpower at an NTUC event underpinned the importance of the social partners being able to work together.

A Thin Fine Line

SMEEU Assistant Executive Secretary Goh Sor Imm Shares On The Close Relation Between Industrial Relations and Tripartism



By **Vanessa Teo**

Her 19 years of service with NTUC has been an ongoing learning journey for the Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Employees’ Union Assistant Executive Secretary Goh Sor Imm, who had the chance to be involved with various departments within the Labour Movement family including the International Metals Federation-Singapore Council where she was an Alternate Member in its Executive Committee from 2006 to 2009.

As an Alternate Member, Miss Goh helped IMF-SC affiliates to advance their cause in the interest of metal workers. With her experience at IMF-SC, Miss Goh was able to see the importance of tripartism, which she has been able to relate to her Industrial Relations role now.

“IR is defined as the relationship between union and management at the workplace. Tripartism describes the relationship between union, management and the government. For tripartism to work well, we need to foster good IR at the company level, otherwise union members and workers can’t see the benefits of tripartism at the national level. My involvement in IMF-SC has helped me to appreciate our system of negotiation, conciliation and arbitration that works, and this has been the reason behind the good relationship SMEEU enjoys with

the management of most of its branches.”

Coming close to almost two decades of service with the Labour Movement, Miss Goh recalls her first posting to the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute where she served from 1990 to 2001, after which she was posted to the IR Department as an Assistant Director. Since 2005, she has been with SMEEU.

Miss Goh’s experience with different departments has allowed her to emerge as a versatile individual.

“In the IR Department, my responsibilities were related to research and inputs to policy making. I was the one chasing the Industrial Relations Officers and union leaders for information and data. Now, at SMEEU, my responsibilities are more operational, and the IR Department chases me instead. However, it is good for IROs to build capacity and capabilities in both policy formulation and implementation, to be able to see the big picture as well as to fight fire,” said Miss Goh.

Having dealt with numerous cases in her IR role, Miss Goh sees each and every single case as a different learning experience, with each case being unique, involving different people with different habits. On this note, Miss Goh cautions against the emotional pit hole when handling cases.

“The most important lesson I learnt from the IR cases I handled is to be able to know when



Vanessa Teo

we should be emotionally detached from the dispute, or we are no longer trying to resolve the dispute but to protect our pride to be one up on management.”

Miss Goh’s passion to serve workers grows more with each day of service.

“I don’t think about how long I have been with NTUC till new colleagues ask me. But the very reason I have stayed so long is because the Labour Movement has provided me with opportunities to stretch myself professionally, and at the same time, fulfil a meaningful purpose,” said Miss Goh.

Correction

In our coverage of “Gift From The Heart” in the 20 October 2009 issue, we had wrongly named one contributing union. The three unions should be Amalgamated Union of Public Daily Rated Workers, Chemical Industries Employees’ Union and Food, Drinks and Allied Workers’ Union. We apologise for the error.