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Thank You, Double Happiness Union Leaders

In terms of numbers, the Labour Movement's 7,000 or so union leaders pale in comparison to the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of union leaders around the world. But in terms of action during tough times, the Labour Movement's union leaders put them all in the shade.

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say explained why at UNITE 2009, which the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute organised and NTUC President John De Payva and SG Lim co-hosted, in appreciation of union executive committee leaders and their spouses, on 25 November 2009.

"Union leaders can be classified under three types. The first type has no idea what is going on and no idea what to do. They are what we call the hopeless type. The second type knows what happened, knows what needs to be done but they are unable to do anything. These are the helpless type. They want to help the workers but they are not able to do so.



By
Marcus Lin

"When Brother John and I were in Geneva for the International Labour Organization Conference this year, we met many union leaders from other countries. Some of them were the hopeless type with no idea what is going on and no idea what to do.

"The majority were the helpless type. They knew they wanted to do many things for the workers. But they could not do much because they did not have the resources, they did not have the support of their government and they did not have the cooperation of the employers. They were very frustrated.

"When they asked what's the industrial

climate like in Singapore, Brother John and I explained what we have been doing – cut costs to save jobs, retraining and so on. They are very envious of us because Singapore union leaders can be very proud to say that we are the third type or Double H type of union leaders – we give our workers Hope and at the same time we offer them real Help.

"As a result, 2009 turned out to be a very encouraging year for Singapore. All over the world, many workers suffered. 59 million workers lost their jobs. Unemployment rate all over the world went up to 7.4 per cent. In the USA it is even worse as it has gone up to 10.2 per cent and still going up."

SG Lim told the more than 500 in attendance, including NTUC Central Committee members, Directors and Social Enterprises CEOs, that many cannot believe that Singapore, with a small exported-oriented economy and GDP forecasted to shrink by 2 to 2.5 per cent in 2009, has an unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent.

"Why? It is because our union leaders give hope and give help and at the same time work with the tripartite partners. So tonight, on behalf of the Labour Movement, I want to say a big thank you to all our union leaders. Thank you very much for being Double H union leaders. Thank you very much for your contribution, thank you very much for standing in unity because when times were tough you did not abandon us and run away.

"Instead, you spent many days and nights away from home to support the workers, you were at NTUC for dialogues, you were at OTC Institute for Upturn the Downturn workshops and you carried the ground working with managements and unions to take care of workers. So for all that, a big thank you to you."

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