

Same Same But Different



by
Seng Han Thong

NTUC Assistant Secretary-General

In Parliament this week, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced two major changes that will have far reaching implications for all Singaporeans in the next 10 to 15 years. One is the restructuring of our economy by reviewing our strategies for long-term economic transformation and the other, the evolving of our political system.

On restructuring the economy, PM Lee pointed out that after the present crises, it will be a different world. Indeed, Singapore will be different too. If we change in the right direction, the Singapore we will be working together, playing together and living together, will be a same same but different country: Strong in economy, competitive in the world market and vibrant as a global city, with the most of us having good jobs.

Thus, Singapore has to change in the face of the changing world.

The Economic Strategies Committee chaired by Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam will look into the issues of seizing growth opportunities, strengthening corporate capabilities, growing human and knowledge capital, creating high-value jobs for Singaporeans and maximising our resources.

We are confident that the committee will apply fresh thinking on the issues and address them with creative answers. The challenge here is how we can mobilise the whole population to support the changes. We need to have effective communications, especially to the affected sectors so that they can see

the benefits of the changes and move forward together with the rest of the workforce.

In good times or in bad times, we are constantly changing to remain relevant and competitive, whether as an individual, a company, an organisation or a nation.

Experience shows us there is always a group of our fellow citizens who do not know the need to change and who will miss the opportunity to upgrade and up-skill. We also observe that recently, with tripartite effort, more and more are seeing the long-term perspective of employment and are prepared to change.

While Singapore is fast changing, NTUC's symbiotic relationship with the PAP government to take good care of our workers and prepare them for the changes will not change. That our tripartism remains a concerted effort among workers, employers and government to sustain growth of our economy and harmonious industrious relationship, this will not change too.

We are making changes during this difficult period. We know that it is easier to accept changes in good times than in bad times. What we can be rest assured is that with changes, our tripartite partners remain pro-workers, pro-business and pro-growth.

Thus, Government is mindful of social cohesion and take it as an important issue to ensure that people at the lower level will feel that they also have something after the changes. The Labour Movement will spare no effort in ensuring that our workers enjoy the fruit of changes as long as they remain competitive. Employers in Singapore know that our systems are flexible and many good ones work hand in hand with our unions to prepare workers for changes.

We will change. But a same same but different kind of change.

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