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**NTUC AND PAP - STRENGTHENING OUR SYMBIOTIC  
RELATIONSHIP FOR A STRONGER SINGAPORE**

Party Chairman  
Secretary General  
My Sisters and Brothers from NTUC  
PAP Comrades

A very good morning to all of you.

I am very honoured to be here today, to present this speech on behalf of a group of young union leaders from the NTUC.

Sister Irda, Brother Raymond, Brother Daniel and last but not least, Brother Kevin.

Like many young people, I neither fully understood nor appreciated the value of unions.

So when a veteran union leader I knew - a guy I respected - asked me to join the union when I started my first job in 2009, I had my fair share of doubts.

What exactly do Unions do?

Do unions have any power, or are they just the proverbial “toothless tigers?”

After I delved into union work, I learnt that being a union leader means always looking out for the needs of our fellow sisters and brothers on the ground with heart.

I learnt that Unions work with the Government and employers to help workers get better jobs and live better lives.

**WHY THE LABOUR MOVEMENT NEEDS TO EVOLVE**

But as Singapore rides the global waves of economic transformation and disruptions, the Labour Movement of the future cannot only just be about industrial relations matters and pay negotiations.

20 years ago, a worker can expect to remain in the same job and same company until retirement.

Today, one worker taking on multiple jobs in multiple industries in his lifetime may become the norm.

Some jobs and skills will be made redundant.  
New jobs will be created and new skills are needed.

## **HOW THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IS EVOLVING**

So, to remain relevant, NTUC made key changes to our constitution and embraced new strategies.

Unions are the core of the Labour Movement. They will now represent all working people to ensure that their needs are served, whether it's re-skilling, re-training, protection or job placement.

The Labour Movement now includes professional guilds and associations across 23 clusters to allow PMEs to expand their network and acquire competencies to stay competitive.

We formed U SME to reach out to 13,000 SMEs and their 330,000 workers.

We also reached out to freelancers, the self-employed, migrant workers and domestic employees.

Our enlarged network, including our industry and tripartite partners, means that we can work together to better re-skill and re-train our workers - to better care for them.

Recently, some workers in the media industry were retrenched.

On 30th Oct this year, my union, the Creative Media Publishing Union and the Singapore Union of Broadcasting Employees tapped on the entire NTUC network to help them.

We provided job opportunities for retrenched media employees during a networking night, and also for those who are looking out for a career change.

During the session, I witnessed the different segments of the labour movement come together, in one setting, with one goal - to serve the needs of our fellow workers.

When the attendees heard from one of our close partners - LinkedIn - about the opportunities that are still out there, I saw how their spirits were lifted. They became motivated to pick up new skills and take on the new opportunities.

But placement is not enough.  
We will help workers through these difficult times.  
We will also help them to prepare for future jobs through upskilling.

This is an example of how we help to rally workers to realise progressive and forward-looking Government policies such as the Industry Transformation Maps and SkillsFuture.

We turn plans into conversations, training, skills and jobs.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NTUC AND PAP**

Almost 50 years ago, in 1969, at the NTUC Modernisation Seminar, the labour movement pledged to move beyond wage bargaining to become PAP's symbiotic partner in nation-building.

PAP and NTUC developed a social compact.

NTUC eschewed confrontation and embraced collaboration.

It sensed the ground to provide feedback for effective and responsive governance.

It mobilised support for the Government, including times when tough decisions need to be made.

In turn, the PAP-led Government leaned forward to take care of the Labour Movement by supporting its right to organise working people and support social enterprises to stretch the hard-earned dollar of workers.

The Government also enacted pro-worker legislations and pro-workers' training support.

This compact anchors our relationship, in the past and now.

At an NTUC Workshop: The Future Direction of the Labour Movement at the Singapore Conference Hall Auditorium in 1989, the late Comrade Mr Lee Kuan Yew said: "Because the PAP derived its early strength from the support of the unions. The Singapore government has always been committed to a strong and constructive trade union movement. This is a fact. And because a single leadership straddles both the PAP and NTUC, Singapore's economy has blossomed." (End quote)

Whether it is in the past, present or future, NTUC and PAP must work together to serve Singaporeans together.

## **WHAT WE MUST DO MOVING FORWARD**

Still, we cannot only rely on the goodwill of the past to carry the NTUC-PAP symbiotic relationship into the future.

NTUC unionists and PAP activists must strengthen this bond for a stronger Singapore.

Can we establish trust at all levels and know each other by name, so that we can fight common battles together?

The veterans fought hand in hand. And we need to do the same.

Moving forward, I would like to call upon my fellow Sisters, Brothers and Comrades to do three things.

Firstly, let's learn together.

We can be more involved in each other's leadership training process, not just at the staff level, but at every level.

We could have an induction programme on PAP for NTUC unionists and conversely, one on the NTUC for PAP activists, to foster greater understanding of our symbiotic relationship.

Secondly, let's plan together.

NTUC has a work plan seminar, PAP also has a work plan seminar. Why don't we participate in each other's work plan seminars?

Coming together to strategise on joint projects may allow us to better understand the concerns and aspirations of all Singaporeans.

Thirdly, let's do together.

We could have joint dialogues, joint learning journeys, exchange programmes and also have unionists help out at meet the people sessions and PAP activists help out at Union events.

Instead of PPF, can we have PNPf? (PAP-NTUC Policy Forum)

The possibilities are endless.

## **CONCLUSION**

I started by saying how I got into union work in the first place.

One single connection has brought me on a wonderful journey in the Labour Movement for the past eight years.

Now, let's embark on a journey to ignite a new wave of personal relationships between NTUC and PAP activists at every level, so that we can all bring our symbiotic relationship to even greater heights.

And together, we will be able to build bridges to all Singaporeans to win hearts and minds, daily.

Together, we can continue to transform, as we have done in the past, to meet any challenges that come our way.

Together, we can serve Singaporeans and build a stronger Singapore, for generations to come.

Thank you.

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