

#1509



## YOUR QUESTIONS

(about the NTUC LABOUR MODERNIZATION SEMINAR)

## — ANSWERED

**FORWARD WITH LABOUR:**

A SINGAPORE NATIONAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS PUBLICATION

IN NOVEMBER 1969 the Singapore National Trades Union Congress held a special SEMINAR on MODERNIZATION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.

Delegates from all the N.T.U.C.'s affiliate unions concluded that the Republic's labour movement must modernize or perish.

The N.T.U.C. immediately set up special committees to implement the SEMINAR'S recommendations for modernization.

**FORWARD WITH LABOUR**

is a series of N.T.U.C. pamphlets to summarise the need to modernize and the main recommendations of the SEMINAR.

**YOUR QUESTIONS — ANSWERED** is the second in the series.

## WHERE WAS THE SEMINAR HELD?

### THE NTUC "MODERNIZATION OF LABOUR" SEMINAR

was held at Trade Union House from November 16-19, 1969.

## WHO PARTICIPATED?

About 160 delegates from the NTUC's affiliate unions, together with 100 observers, participated in the Seminar.

## WHY WAS THIS SEMINAR HELD?

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP was down from 120,000 in 1965 to 90,000 in 1969, a 25% loss in 4 years.

ONLY 50% of the present membership was paid-up.

FOUR-FIFTHS OF NTUC operating expenses (about \$400,000 per annum) came from a government grant.

THE EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION of 1968 restricted organised labour's bargaining powers.

## WHAT WERE THE OBJECTS OF THE SEMINAR?

1. TO MAKE AN HONEST and comprehensive analysis of the deterioration in the labour movement.
2. TO STUDY EXAMPLES of successful trade union movements, e.g. those in SWEDEN, WEST GERMANY and ISRAEL.
3. TO RECOMMEND HOW the downward trend be reversed and transformed into a great forward and upward movement of change and modernisation bringing self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-respect.
4. TO FIND WAYS AND MEANS to finance the change.

## HOW WAS THE SEMINAR CONDUCTED?

TWELVE SEMINAR PAPERS were presented and examined by THREE WORKSHOPS:

### WORKSHOP A examined and discussed:

#### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL OPTIONS AND THE RESPONSE NEEDED IF THE CHALLENGE IS TO BE MET —

- (a) The Trade Union Movement in Singapore
- (b) Employment Legislation
- (c) Political and Social Options of Organised Labour
- (d) Successful Trade Union Organisation in the Developed Countries — the German Example  
— the Swedish Example  
— the Israeli Example

### WORKSHOP B examined and discussed:

#### STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR MODERNIZATION —

- (a) Co-operation
- (b) Education for Leadership in the Labour Movement
- (c) Workers' Participation in Management
- (d) Description of NTUC Functions and Activities

### WORKSHOP C examined and discussed:

#### HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR MODERNIZATION —

- (a) The Need for Financial Autonomy, Leadership and Structural Development
- (b) An Analysis of the Finance of Unions

## THE STANDARD OF THE SEMINAR PAPERS:

"These papers are businesslike documents, like directors' reports, containing facts and figures, arguments and analyses."

— S. RAJARATNAM, Minister for Labour & Foreign Affairs

EVEN THE MOON WAS CONQUERED WITH "MODERNIZED LABOUR."

### WHAT WERE THE SEMINAR'S RECOMMENDATIONS?

The Seminar's RECOMMENDATIONS for a programme of DYNAMIC MODERNIZATION included:

ACCEPTANCE of full responsibility, co-equally with government and management, for the survival of Singapore in the crucial years ahead, and for its continued and expanding economic development and modernization;

RE-ORGANISATION of the Trade Union movement on an industry-wide basis;

NATIONAL RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN to increase union membership from one in every five workers to at least three in every five;

ALL-OUT EFFORT to achieve 100% unionization in existing unions;

AMALGAMATION of small unions (less than 1,000 members) wherever possible;

A CORPS of full-time executives, working from NTUC HQ, to render assistance wherever needed;

A DEVELOPMENT FUND to help unions in need;

INTENSIVE AND SPECIALISED education and training for trade unionists through the medium of a Workers' College and other educational agencies;

ESTABLISHMENT of a Workers' Co-operative Commonwealth through Life Insurance, Housing, Servicing, Consumer and Producer Co-operatives, and a Workers' Bank;

INCREASE of Union dues to 1% of salaries on a graduated scale with the introduction of an administra-

tive check-off system; and 25% of subscriptions to be the new affiliation fee to the NTUC;

ACCEPTANCE of the principles underlying the Employment Act coupled with a demand for the removal of the Act's glaring anomalies;

INTRODUCTION of a mandatory code of Labour-Management Relations throughout public and private sectors;

JOINT CONSULTATIVE machinery between management and union at all levels;

EQUITABLE sharing of the fruits of increased productivity.

### COMMENTS ON THE SEMINAR:

#### 1) THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW:

"Self-respect is what our trade unions have and will give to our workers — that protection of a man's right to his dignity as a human being and as a citizen. He may be an unskilled worker, but he is one of us..... It is tomorrow that counts. A well-educated, well-organised and mobilised population will be setting the pace..... This shows that you have a very important role to play in nation-building."

#### 2) THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR & FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR. S. RAJARATNAM:

"I cannot conceive of a successful modernization of Singapore, economically, politically, socially and culturally, without the existence and active participation of strong and vigorous trade unions. This seminar will do a great deal to hasten the emergence of the new-style unionism which will make modernization and economic development its over-riding objective."

#### 3) EASTERN SUN EDITORIAL OF NOVEMBER 18, 1969:

"...what happens in the current seminar is not only important for Singapore alone but will also have to

serve as lessons in trade unionism to other countries in Southeast Asia... It is a rare opportunity for Singapore, which is the second most affluent society in Asia, to show its neighbours that affluence stems not only from hard-headed government planning, not only from a high skilled managerial class, but also from the power of organised labour."

#### 4) STRAITS TIMES EDITORIAL OF NOVEMBER 22, 1969:

"Full of spirit and ideas the Trade Union Congress Seminar ought to prove the most constructive conference the Singapore labour movement has had. This depends, however, on the follow-up — on the dedication of trade union leaders and the realization of the ordinary member that the movement is on the threshold of a new era."

#### AFTER THE SEMINAR — WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

##### THE STRUGGLE HAS BEGUN!

##### THE THREE SPEARHEADS OF OUR STRUGGLE TO MODERNIZE:

- 1) THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF ACTION
- 2) THE MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE
- 3) THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The function of the Action Council, which comprises two delegates from each affiliate of the NTUC, is to organise support for the decisions of the MODERNIZATION and DEVELOPMENT Committees.

These two front-line Committees have met several times. Among the most important decisions they have taken and implemented.

- SEND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT BACK TO SCHOOL! Classes for hundreds of trade union officials have begun — orientation classes in all the critical lessons of the great Seminar.
- These trade union leaders in turn will be sent to schools all over the island where, in evening classes,

they will teach thousands of rank-and-file members the vital strategies of renewal, change and modernization that have come out of the Seminar.

#### ■ BLUEPRINTS FOR CO-OPERATIVE LIFE INSURANCE AND HOUSING SCHEMES HAVE BEEN DRAWN UP.

■ EXPERT ASSISTANCE is being sought and has been promised from the flourishing trade union movements of Sweden, West Germany and Israel.

■ Pamphlets have been written and published on the MODERNIZATION OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. Under the slogan, "FORWARD WITH LABOUR" they deal with such themes as:

WHY GO MODERN?

WE ARE CO-OWNERS OF INDEPENDENT SINGAPORE

MILLIONAIRE CO-OPS

YOUR QUESTIONS — ANSWERED!

■ PROGRAMMES on these themes will soon be broadcast over TV and Radio.

**A NEW VISION, A NEW PATTERN, AND A NEW HOPE HAS BEEN BORN IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT OF SINGAPORE**

**FORWARD TO OUR FUTURE!**

**FORWARD WITH LABOUR!**

**MAJULAH SINGAPURA!**

AFTER YOU HAVE READ THIS PLEASE PASS IT ON TO YOUR FRIENDS.

