

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR, MR. JEK YEUN THONG,
AT THE FIRST BIENNIAL GENERAL COUNCIL CONFERENCE OF THE
UNITED WORKERS OF PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ON TUESDAY, 29TH
SEPTEMBER, 1964, AT 10 A.M. AT CULTURAL CENTRE

I have great pleasure to address you today on the occasion of your First Biennial General Council Conference.

The birth of your Union three years ago ushered in a new era in the trade union history of the workers in the oil industry in Singapore. I am sure that those persons who were responsible for the birth of the United Workers of Petroleum Industry will have a permanent place in the history of the Singapore trade union movement; they will be long remembered for their great contribution to the unification of the workers in the oil industry.

In a comparatively short period of three years you have built up a virile and responsible organisation which has not only won increased wages and better working conditions for the members but also played a leading part in the emancipation of the trade union movement from the anti-national elements and in consolidating and strengthening the democratic trade union movement under the leadership of the N.T.U.C. The democratic structure of your Union today and its achievements since it anchored itself firmly in the democratic fold illustrates clearly and unmistakably to those who still cling to the undemocratic and anti-national fold, that the responsible democratic trade union movement can achieve more.

Today our nation - Malaysia - is facing a grave emergency. Indonesian aggressors have landed on our shores and their agents and sympathisers have caused and are still attempting to cause discord within the country. We struggled for the creation of Malaysia not by arms but by the democratic method of consultation and agreement and we are ready to fight to the last to maintain its sovereignty and territorial integrity, come what may.

In this connection, your union - a truly national one - has stated in unmistakable terms that it will play its part unflinchingly in the preservation of the security of this country and the maintenance of goodwill amongst all Malaysian citizens; you have also worked hard for the creation of stable industrial relations in the oil industry and in the context of the present times this is doubly important. No one can deny that your union's sober appraisal of the situation and the action that it is taking to meet this situation reflects the true greatness of the democratic trade union movement, which has to share in full both the ups and downs in the life of a nation. Your union epitomises the true function of a trade union - responsibility for the welfare of its members and responsibility for the well-being of the nation.

I wish you continued success in your endeavours.

SEPTEMBER 29, 1964.

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