

# Unions Have A Part In Internal Security

By  
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“**H**appiness, prosperity and progress” as enshrined in Singapore’s National Pledge is not a guarantee and can never be taken for granted. They are painstakingly acquired and have to be guarded with constant vigilance.

This was brought across vividly to a team from NTUC led by NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say during an eye-opening Learning Journey to the Internal Security Department Heritage Centre on 23 October 2009.

Looking at the Singapore of today, younger people might find it hard to imagine that Singapore has had its fair share of problems and the ISD Heritage Centre serves as a constant reminder of the bad old days and that everything can still fall apart if we drop our guard.

The NTUC team was taken on an educational tour of the problems that Singapore has dealt with and is still tackling – “isms” like communism, communalism, terrorism and religious and racial extremism that caused social upheavals, violence and bloodshed.

On display was an array of crude and sophisticated weapons, contraptions,

paraphernalia and propaganda tools and literature devised to subvert and undermine society through the years.

Of particular interest to the team was the section on the communist-infested trade unions that wreaked havoc in the 1950s and early 1960s before the emergence of NTUC. One particular photograph on display that caught SG Lim’s eye showed unrest that took place during May Day 1965. It was such a great difference compared to the tripartite celebrations that take place on May Day nowadays.

SG Lim said that internal security is not just the job of the ISD but a shared responsibility and unions with their great numbers and mix of people can play a big part. Apart from looking after workers and contributing to the economy,

unions are helping preserve harmony in a multi-racial, multi-religious Singapore by being involved in the Community Engagement Programme that prepares the different communities to be ready and united in reacting to a crisis.

SG Lim stressed that what we do in peace time is critical as it would be too late if we waited for something to happen before reacting: “It is our collective responsibility that trust is not destroyed in our community”. He posed a question: “If you are a terrorist, what are you trying to achieve? Bomb a building, kill some people? The biggest damage that a terrorist can do is to destroy trust in the community between the different races and religions.” And that, by extension, would ruin the economy and workers’ livelihoods.



A picture worth a thousand words (Courtesy of ISD).