

ONLINE CRITICISM OF YOUNG PAP PRODUCTION PAP leaders defend party video

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A screen grab from the five-minute video featuring Young PAP members from various constituencies. It was supposed to be seen only by party members, but was uploaded on YouTube three weeks ago. -- PHOTO: SCREEN GRAB FROM YOUTUBE

THE People's Action Party (PAP) is standing by its youth wing, which has produced a video that has gone viral for all the wrong reasons.

It acknowledged the video's "raw and unpolished" quality, but thanked its activists for "their tireless work on the ground" in a Facebook post yesterday.

The five-minute video features Young PAP members, aged 17 to 40, from various constituencies narrating their hopes for the party and Singapore.

The youth wing is chaired by Social and Family Development Minister Chan Chun Sing.

The video was supposed to be seen only by party members at last December's party convention. But it was uploaded on YouTube three weeks ago and, over the weekend, netizens have ridiculed the members for their "robotic recitations" of a prepared script.

Others questioned their ability to help citizens when they could not produce a "watchable" video.

Some also wondered whether the video had passed Media Development Authority (MDA) rules regulating political films.

The MDA told The Straits Times yesterday that the video was exempted from the rules (see sidebar). It was subsequently given a PG rating.

The Straits Times understands that each constituency wrote its own script and filmed its segment which was then submitted for editing.

"Most of the negative comments are focused on the acting or the background," said a Young PAP member who declined to be named. "But the content is logical and means well."

For instance, the youth wing members in East Coast GRC said they hoped that party membership would include more professions, "other than lawyers, doctors, military men and civil servants".

The member added that Young PAP members were surprised the video was uploaded.

The PAP headquarters also said on Facebook that "we did not expect that our humble in-house production would go viral like this".

But Institute of Policy Studies research fellow Carol Soon points out that the boundary between private and public is non-existent, especially when the material is posted online in a public space.

"Content targeted at a specific group is guaranteed to reach unintended audiences when posted on the Internet," she told The Straits Times. "This could be a boon or a bane."

"There is an increasing need for one to consider how a message would be interpreted when it is consumed out of context, and the misconceptions that might arise," she added.

Several PAP politicians have gone online in defence of their young comrades.

Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin said yesterday on the PAP's Facebook page that "though the video may be raw and unpolished (which it is), our activists' service and efforts are anything but that".

Tampines GRC MP Baey Yam Keng also cheered his Tampines North activists.

"Many of them work behind the scenes and prefer to keep a low profile. The criticism on how some of them appear in front of the camera is unnecessary and unfair," he said.