

## **ST publishes misleading news saying PSP against WP's minimum wage proposal**

***Vincent Low***

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Yesterday (22 Oct), the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) organized an online forum inviting PAP, WP, and PSP to talk about their parties' assessment of GE2020 and their agenda in the near future. This was reported by the Straits Times ('WP calls for minimum wage 'right now' while PAP, PSP cite need for higher productivity: IPS forum').

The online forum was moderated by IPS senior research fellow, Dr Gillian Koh. One of the hot topics discussed was none other the minimum wage issue.

WP, represented by the new Sengkang MP Louis Chua said that his party is keen to implement a universal minimum wage system of \$1,300 a month in Singapore "right now".

He does not see a universal minimum wage system and the PAP government's Progressive Wage Model (PWM) as diametrically opposed but added, "It's about people having to feed their families at this point in time, and not having to wait for (the PWM) to be rolled out to their particular sector."

Indeed, after 8 years since PWM was first mooted in 2012, it has been implemented in only 3 industry sectors – cleaning, landscape and security sectors, with at least dozens more kept in the waiting. At the moment, some 32,000 full-time workers in Singapore – or 1.7 per cent of the local workforce – take home less than \$1,300 each month.

In response, the PAP, represented by Parliamentary Secretary for Health and MP for Jurong GRC, Rahayu Mahzam, simply reiterated the government's point. She said that PWM is effectively a minimum wage plus. "We have to come to a point where we do not just keep pushing the ideology, but look at how it works in a particular context," she added.

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Then, Straits Times (ST) went on to report that PSP is against WP proposal. "Progress Singapore Party is also against the WP proposal," ST reported.

In fact, PSP assistant secretary-general, Mr Francis Yuen, did not say that at all. This morning (23 Oct), PSP issued a public statement to counter the misleading assertion from ST.

"We refer to Straits Times article on the IPS forum published on 22nd October 2020. In the report, our ASG Mr Francis Yuen was quoted to be against WP's proposal for minimum wage," wrote PSP.

"This is not true and is a misleading interpretation of what was said. Our ASG did not say or allude to PSP being against minimum wage. The thrust of his comments is minimum wage will not drive up business cost as wages is not the only component that make up business costs. Furthermore, businesses should leverage on productivity to defray any increase in wages."

That is to say, PSP is in support of having a minimum wage to help raise the level of low wage earners in Singapore. It's not known why ST would want to publish such misleading news for public consumption.

"As a matter of fact, the slide presented at the forum clearly showed minimum living wage is one of our beliefs. Although it is not exactly the same as minimum wage, the spirit of raising the level of low wages is the same. The slide is attached for your reference," added PSP.

Furthermore, during the online discussion yesterday, Mr Yuen also mentioned that businesses should raise productivity so as to reduce over-reliance on foreign workers. "It should not be a system where foreign workers are brought in because they are cheap, and, therefore, it's expedient for a business to lower its cost based on the fact that they are much cheaper," he said.

On PSP's succession plan, Mr Yuen stressed that the party is grooming new talent and "may see very different people even in a year's time".

"The plan is not to have just one person succeeding Dr Tan (Cheng Bock) but a group of people," he said, adding that the presence in Parliament of PSP NCMPs Hazel Poa and Leong Mun Wai will help establish the party further.