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SPEECH BY DR RICHARD HU, MINISTER FOR FINANCE,
AT THE FOURTH ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE DINNER
AT THE SHERATON TOWERS BALLROOM
ON FRIDAY, 10 JULY 1992 AT 8.05 PM

Mr Andrew Chew, Head of the Civil Service,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In watching a play or movie, the attraction is usually the actors or a good story-line. Some of us may not pay much attention to the play-wright or director, fewer still will notice who the producer is, and not many will even have any idea what the backstage crew does. But without these people working 'behind the scenes' there will be no performance.

Recognition for Administrative Officers

2. In much the same way, Administrative Officers are often in the background, assisting the Ministers in policy-formulation, fine-tuning policies for execution and seeing through their implementation. Administrative Officers form the interface between the political leadership and the machinery of government, filling many key positions in the public sector. You play a vital role in the development of the country, yet very often what you do is away from the public eye. The public at large knows what doctors, lawyers, policemen or soldiers do. But the nature of an Administrative Officer's job is not easily defined and his contributions are less apparent. Nevertheless, it is equally important for Administrative Officers to have a distinct identity and a strong sense of pride.

3. The annual Administrative Service Dinner marks the significant milestones of the Administrative Officer's career, from confirmation in the Service, entry into the Superscale grades through to substantive appointment as Permanent Secretary. It is also fitting at this occasion to accord recognition to the others who have done well and

are promoted each year.

4. The uniformed services publicise promotions to their senior ranks. The Administrative Service has always fought shy of doing so, preferring to avoid the limelight. I think the Administrative Service should be accorded the attention it deserves. Administrative Officers are involved in making policies which have immense impact on the nation. It is appropriate to recognise the achievements of senior Administrative Officers who have progressed into the upper echelons of the Service and give credit where it is due. Hence beginning this year, the Head of the Civil Service will issue the list of officers promoted each year at the Administrative Service Dinner.

Civil Service College

5. The Administrative Service cannot achieve its mission in a vacuum. It needs to work closely with the rest of the Civil Service, especially senior officers from the other services, sharing common values and traditions. Unfortunately, the Civil Service presently lacks an institutional focal point where tradition is preserved and values shaped and transmitted through generations.

6. In some countries, there are established institutions where civil service recruits into their senior services are imbued with common values prior to their entry into public service. For instance, the French Civil Service has the prestigious Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA) which conducts two-year courses for candidates selected through tough competitive examinations. Graduates of ENA or Enarques identify themselves not only as graduates of the institution, but also the class they graduated from. Nearer home, the Malaysian INTAN runs a one-year qualifying course for its Administrative and Diplomatic Service cadets. These courses enable senior civil servants from different backgrounds to share a common experience and build a strong bond that often lasts throughout their entire career.

7. Singapore needs an equivalent institution. However, it cannot be on the same scale, nor can we afford to put our officers through such 1- or 2-year academic courses like the other countries. Instead we will have an institution where those in senior management positions can come together for training and interaction. The Government has therefore decided to establish a Civil Service College dedicated to developing senior officers in policy and strategic planning as well as in managerial and leadership skills.

8. The courses to be conducted by the College will also aim at building esprit de corps of top civil servants, imbuing in them a strong sense of public service and inculcating a practical approach to public administration.

9. The College will draw on the varied expertise of external and adjunct lecturers, politicians and foreign guest speakers. The courses will therefore help to raise the level of service orientation of senior civil servants, provide an international outlook and incorporate opportunities for participation from statutory boards, government-linked companies and the private sector. Bringing together the various sectors will enhance national teamwork necessary for the survival and progress of a small country like Singapore.

10. The College will start operating in the next financial year at temporary premises. New premises for the Civil Service College will be built and ready in about 5 years' time. It is planned that besides lecture rooms, seminar rooms and an auditorium, the new College premises will also have facilities which can be used to hold civil service-wide functions like strategic seminars, awards ceremonies, conferences for superscale officers, etc. We can also look forward to the possibility of holding our future Administrative Service dinners there.

11. In closing, let me congratulate the officers who have been conferred National Day honours, those who have been promoted, confirmed in Service and those who have made it to the Superscale grades.

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