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SPEECH BY MR S DHANABALAN, MINISTER FOR CULTURE,
AT A NATIONAL COURTESY CAMPAIGN BUFFET DINNER
AT ISTANA ON WEDNESDAY, 26 AUGUST '81 AT 7.30 PM

Courtesy Campaigns will be successful if we sincerely believe that through some effort we can make Singapore a more courteous society. If most people do not believe this, the campaign will not succeed. I believe that campaigns of this kind can succeed. Some believe that courtesy is determined by culture and tradition. But such culture and tradition to be transmitted to each new generation must not only be taught but seen to be practised. The more people practise courtesy the greater the social pressure on others, who are indifferent, to do the same. During a campaign, people become more conscious of the need to be courteous. At the same time, people also become more aware that they have a right to expect courtesy from certain people like the salesgirl, the person at a government counter or the bus conductor. Those who go to a shop will not accept that the courtesy badge which features a smiling face is a substitute for a smile on the face of the girl who wears it. They will not accept rude responses from counter clerks when there are posters all around urging courtesy. The aim of the campaign is to heighten consciousness of courtesy and to increase the "critical mass" of courtesous behaviour.

I am happy to note that more managements, campaign organisers and workers now share the belief that a campaign of this kind can achieve results if sustained over a period of time. There has been active participation in campaign activities this year from numerous organisations in all sectors of our society - civil service, hotels, shops, restaurants, taxi drivers and owners, bus companies, schools, factories, hawkers establishments and grassroots organisations like Residents' Committees and Citizens Consultative Committees. There have been certain new programmes and approaches. Training films have also continued to play an important role. Singapore Bus

Services produced a film for their bus crew; the Automobile Association of Singapore produced a film for the motoring public; and the Ministry of Culture with help from the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board and Peter Chew's produced a film for the service establishments.

There were also more jointly organised programmes this year. CCCs worked closely with MCs and RCs for a "Be A Good Neighbour" thrust in their campaign. Managements in the transport, service, public and industrial sectors worked closely with their unions. The unions played a bigger role than before. Their slogan "Courtesy Fosters Team Spirit" was pivotal in all courtesy programmes involving the workforce. NTUC has in fact urged its unions to continue their courtesy campaigns till the end of the year.

NTUC's example is worthy of emulation. We need an on-going approach to the campaign. Some hotels run two campaigns a year. Other organisations have instituted regular training programmes. If organisations are committed, they will come out with systematic and effective plans to encourage people to be courteous. It is therefore important to have the will to make the campaign successful.

The mass media have a crucial role. Press coverage will not only sustain public interest but motivate managers, government officials or workers in grassroots institutions to keep up the momentum. The mass media have played a commendable role in this year's courtesy campaign. Nanyang Siang Pau did an extensive survey, based on over 1,400 respondents, and carried the findings in a supplement. The Straits Times' Hotline and Living The News series have injected new life and relevance to campaign reporting. Because readers could identify with the brickbats and bouquets reported daily, they became more aware of the importance of courtesy in daily human interactions.

My Ministry, meanwhile, will re-organise the National Courtesy Campaign Working Committee to include representatives from the unions, managements, service establishments and transport associations. The Working Committee will encourage continuing in-house programmes. The Committee will pay more attention to appraisal of the campaign sector by sector - How much progress is

being made and what the obstacles are. Such assessments should be undertaken by all concerned. Problem areas should be identified and strategies worked out to overcome them. We should build up on the gains we have made so far. I understand that certain mass media organisations, on their own initiative, are preparing post-campaign evaluations. This is an encouraging development.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your contributions to the campaign. Please continue your good work. I wish you a pleasant evening.

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