

Speech by Mr. Tang See Chim, Chairman of the National Productivity Centre and Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Finance on the occasion of the Opening of the Seminar "Improving Management Effectiveness Through Using Management Information Systems Based on Electronic Data Processing" on 21st October, 1969 at 9.00 a.m.

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It is often said that the surest way to a bright and promising future is to make the right decision at the right time. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to see so many top managers responding to this seminar, which is concerned with the decision-making process. I am glad that business leaders in Singapore are keeping up with modern management ideas and concept. This augurs well for the future of our Republic.

For industrialisation, though it holds the promise to economic progress, also brings with it multifarious problems: We have got to look out for new markets, to produce quality goods at competitive prices; local consumers have to be persuaded to accept made-in-Singapore products as on par with imported goods. Industries in this country will therefore not be in a position to compete with those in technically-advanced countries, unless management can equip themselves with modern and effective techniques used in the developed countries. What we really need in Singapore,

if this rapid industrialisation, is a new breed of dynamic management personnel who are constantly alive to innovations aimed at greater efficiency and higher productivity. We cannot afford to let ourselves be fettered by old-fashioned ideas. To progress rapidly, we must learn by the experiences of the industrially-advanced nations, adopt their strong points and avoid the pitfalls. Industrialisation does not stop short at getting in the investors, at building factories and starting production. We must not forget the vital questions of staying in business, of growth and advancement. One of the prerequisites for industrial growth is

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to maintain that vital one step ahead of others. To accomplish this, we need to make bold, effective and relevant decisions without being bogged down by masses of awe-inspiring data. Without adequate information, decision-making becomes risky conjectures.

Therefore, a Manager's real concern is to have an effective system that will provide him with the correct information for decision-making - an integrated Management Information System. Electronic Data Processing (EDP), however, is not new to Singapore - both Government institutions and private establishments have used the computer for some years. The latest statistics show that there are at present nineteen computer installations in the Republic, and over 136 firms are already using them. A recent survey conducted by the National Productivity Centre reveals that out of 117 firms, employing 100 to 3,000 employees; 52 firms have expressed the desire to go in for computer services. Computers have been used in billing, accounting, payrolls, inventory controls, sales forecastings, statistics and other fields. Thus, EDP is by no means new to us. Unfortunately, computer services have only so far been employed on an ad hoc basis. At best, more for sorting out data at super-human speed, rather than for processing data to provide Management with information essential for control and decision-making. For effective decision-making, the computer must be integrated and built into the management framework. Hence, the need for an integrated Management Information System.

No one can tell what Singapore will be like in ten years' time. To a very material extent, however, what the future will be depends on the decisions we take today. Whether our

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industrial, commercial or business enterprises will survive and expand depend on what we decide today. No one can guarantee that we make the right decisions all the time. But I believe that a Management Information System based on EDP gives us a better chance of making the right decisions. An integrated Management Information System can bridge the over-yawning gap between technology and management science. With this modern method at its command, top management can take stock of its position and decide on its needs and how best to meet them. You are the decision-makers. Your decisions now will go a long way in shaping the future. On your decisions is sealed the fate of your enterprise - whether it grows, stands still or slowly fades away.

Before I conclude, I would like to pay a tribute to the International Labour Organisation. For the last 17 years, the ILO has made relentless efforts to create many Centres throughout the world to train and develop managers and specialists in the field of management. The National Productivity Centre, Singapore, is a good example of this tireless work. It was established with the assistance of ILO, an executing agency of the United Nations Development Programme. This year is the 50th anniversary of ILO. I wish it a happy 50th anniversary and every future success.

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