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Speech by Prof. Wong Lin Ken, Minister for Home Affairs,  
at official opening of Barden Singapore (Pte) Ltd. on  
Monday, 28th February 1972 at 5.30 p.m.

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Mr. Tomlinson,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I derive particular pleasure in addressing the opening ceremony of Barden Singapore Private Ltd. This is an American company that brings a new level of precision engineering into the Republic. Indeed, this company is not only the first of its kind in the Republic, but also in the region.

It was my first public duty, as the Republic's Ambassador to the United States, to declare open our Investment Centre in New York in 1967. Since then American investment in fixed assets has increased almost threefold to some \$1,400 million. Another \$1,000 million is in the pipe-line for new and expansion projects. In 1967, American investment amounted to 9% of all foreign investment. To-day, it is 35%. During the years 1967 to 1971, our trade with the United States had increased more than three times.

Now that American investment flows into the Republic, we tend to forget how much effort had gone into stimulating this development. When I opened the New York Investment Centre, members of the American press were invited. After the official ceremony, I lunched with the Press representatives. Now, I can frankly reveal that there were few present who thought we could successfully industrialize. The few were myself, the officials of the Centre, and the American public relations firm, whose business it was to generate confidence in the industrial future of Singapore.

But no amount of effort made by this public relations firm could have dispelled the fears of the investors, if the government had not taken tough but unpopular policies to remedy the situation, and if the people of Singapore had not responded to these policies with restraint and self-discipline. Internal political instability, rampant strikes, student demonstrations, and riots - all these deterred American companies from even taking a serious look at Singapore as a potential centre of investment. I have no doubts these must also have been major deterrents to investors from other countries.

To-day, we are climbing up the ladder of industrial success because we have successfully eliminated these fears. Indeed, we have passed the days when our investment centres all over the world jump at any proposal to come to Singapore. We have become selective, stimulating investment that provides long term scope for progressive upgrading of technology and skill. Only by stimulating such investment can we ensure that the people of Singapore can reap higher rewards in a rapidly changing world.

It is in the context of this selective investment policy that I particularly welcome Barden Singapore (Pte) Ltd. into the growing community of precision engineering industries.

All our efforts to provide in Singapore a favourable climate for foreign investment, and all our promotion programmes abroad, would have borne no fruits, if we had not also adopted a rational immigration policy. Foreign capital and technology are allowed into Singapore because local capital and level of technology is either inadequate or, simply, wanting. Expatriates are admitted in Singapore because locals are either inadequate in numbers, inadequate in their experience and qualifications,

or simply not available. Put it briefly, expatriates have been admitted, and will continue to be admitted, because their contribution towards our economic development is positive and productive.

There has been some criticism of our immigration policy towards the expatriates. It is a tribute to our younger business executives, professionals, and experts that there are in their ranks those who can see the role of expatriates in our industrial development. Despite public criticism, it is a fact of life that the opportunities for jobs previously held only by expatriates have multiplied since 1959. Not only this, but new avenues of employment have also increased, and will continue to do so, if our industrialization continues to gain momentum. Never before has any generation in Singapore faced the opportunities and the prospects brought about by industrialization. Indeed, there are many cases of rapid promotions, which can only be described as spectacular.

As the economy continues to expand and diversify, the need for expatriates is going to continue. For this reason, it is not practical or realistic to fix a quota for entry for expatriates, or impose a firm period of time for Singaporeanization, as some critics would want the government to do. The government takes an interest in firms training local staff for promotions. There have been occasions when certain firms have been requested to produce their training programmes. But the greatest sanction on any foreign firm not providing the training programmes for promotion fast enough for the aspiration of its local staff is simply a high turnover of local staff. As a whole, our policy towards "expatriates" is appropriate to the needs

of our industrialization. Wider opportunities have been, and are being created for the locals, and the "expatriates" admitted are part of that development process that has made this possible.

Before I conclude, let me once again say how pleased I am here to-day to preside over the ceremonial opening of Barden Singapore (Pte) Ltd. My best wishes for its success. And on this note, I have great pleasure in declaring as officially open, this milestone in our industrial progress, Barden Singapore (Pte) Ltd., on this day, the 28th of February 1972.