

*5/14/74*

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Speech by Mr Ong Soo Chuan, Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Installation  
Dinner of the Marketing Institute of Singapore  
(新加坡市场营销学会) on Saturday, 20 April, 1974  
at Ming Court at 8.00 p.m.

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Change is the essence of life. Hence, the success of any human enterprise, whether individual or collective, leans heavily on, among other things, its ability to anticipate and react to new situations. It must be taken for granted that every trained man, through experience or institutionalised training or both, is equipped with the knowledge not only to perform the basic functions required of him but also to respond to and meet the changing environment in his field. This quality of being able to foresee and cope effectively with changes is all the more important to Singapore, because our national well-being is critically dependent on the performance of our only national resource: 2.2 million Singaporeans.

Like other professions, marketing has become too specialised a profession for the amateurs. Marketing may be described as the final act of a long series of a production process of a business enterprise which seeks to create, promote and finally to distribute its products to consumers. Marketing, therefore, bears a very heavy responsibility since the ultimate rewards of the toil and sweat that go into the creation of these products will rest considerably on successful marketing.

Singapore's economic well-being is also increasingly dependent on international trade, favourable capital and investments flows and tourist spendings. Each of these activities demands its own kind of marketing expertise. Hence, the responsibility and the magnitude of the role of the marketing profession in Singapore speaks well for itself.

As is well documented and discussed, the modern economy, whether national or international, is so closely

knitted that every of its constituent components must act in harmony with the rest in an increasingly complex network. The national economy cannot be truly isolated or independent. As you are aware, the ugly inflation which originated in developed countries has seeped into Singapore. Besides inflation, the energy crisis has slowed down the economies of the developed countries. To put this simply, it means, among other things, that these developed countries in having to pay substantially more for their fuel, have less money with which to buy our products and to invest in Singapore. Inflation and high cost of energy have also caused a contraction of production in developed economies. Industries in developing countries, including Singapore, have suffered because of high production cost and a reduction in the exports of industrial raw materials by the developed countries.

With the deterioration in the world economy, you as marketing executives are now confronted with pressing challenges - how to push and sell your products in a market whose will and capacity to invest or buy have been weakened. This marketing problem has also been compounded by the higher cost of production in Singapore. Marketing executives will have to anticipate and react to the serious implications of this new situation. There is no doubt you have to work harder.

Notwithstanding the debilitating effects of the international inflation and energy crisis, Singapore's exports remain high. Entrepot trade which formed 34% of Singapore's external trade in 1973 went up to \$7,260 m from \$5,230 m in 1972, showing an increase of \$1,030 m or 38.8% as against an increase of only \$125 m or 2.6% in 1972 and \$330 m or 6.9% in 1971. Exports of Singapore-made goods which formed 22.3% of Singapore's external trade recorded a very outstanding performance in 1973. The amount surged forward from \$3,033 m in 1972 to \$4,781 m in 1973, showing an increase of \$1,748 m or 58%. In contrast, the growth in 1972 and 1971 were

25.5% and 12.8% respectively. The rise in domestic exports indicates the success of Singapore's industrialisation and our export promotion drive.

This is indeed an eloquent testimony of the efforts all those concerned with the management of our national well-being. The marketing profession can rightly share this achievement with many others. But Singapore must prosper and not just survive. Towards this end, Singapore has embarked on industrialisation to complement its traditional entrepot trade and continue to build and improve its economic and commercial infrastructure. With excellent and efficient communication network, banking and financial facilities, existence of international and multinational corporations, Singapore can reach out far beyond its own region for the exchange of goods, technology and services.

In addition, we must make quick adjustments on a broad front to:-

- (1) Search for new markets and sources of foreign investment;
- (2) Search for cheaper sources of supplies;
- (3) Produce local goods more efficiently, thereby reducing costs; and
- (4) Improve the distribution system in order to lower prices charged to consumers.

The Government has established a Trade Development Section in the Department of Trade to primarily promote exports of Singapore-made goods and to assist manufacturers and traders to mount a marketing drive, including the organising of trade missions, trade exhibitions and trade fairs overseas. This clearly shows that the Government will continue not only to encourage and provide incentives to private industries but it will also actively participate in creating conditions conducive to the expansion and consolidation of Singapore's industries and their markets. The visit of the Minister

for Foreign Affairs, Mr S Rajaratnam, to West Asia is aimed at seeking out mutually-beneficial areas for long term co-operation with the West Asian countries. It is also an effort to search for potential markets and investments for Singapore.

Opportunities in West Asia should merit your attention and efforts. You should, however, continue to consolidate and expand your traditional and new markets as well.

Marketing executives should be on the move all the time in order to consolidate and spread their areas of operations. I am confident that you are well-equipped and will be able to open up more avenues for Singapore goods and services. But as economic development in an open economy, such as ours, can undoubtedly be greatly accelerated by foreign investment, your marketing efforts should additionally be directed to attracting investments into Singapore.

The Government will continue to give all possible support to you and your efforts must be seen as part of our national effort to create a prosperous Singapore. The efforts of the private sector and government must always work in harmony since the end result of these is to bring about national prosperity which is enjoyed by everyone in the country. When you are on a marketing mission overseas, you should therefore remember that you carry with you not only the credentials of your company but also that of Singapore. You should continue to uphold the image and substance that is Singapore. You should continue to be seen by your customers as an industrious, honest, helpful and dedicated business executive - Singapore and your company will be truly proud of you.

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