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SPEECH BY MR LIM CHEE ONN, SECRETARY-GENERAL NTUC
AND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO, AT THE INAUGURATION
OF THE NTUC COURTESY CAMPAIGN AT THE MANDARIN
BALLROOM ON SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 1981, AT 8.30 P.M.

"COURTESY FOSTERS TEAM SPIRIT"

On behalf of the NTUC Central Committee I welcome you to this inauguration of the NTUC Courtesy Campaign. We are particularly honoured to have with us the Prime Minister who has graciously agreed to be the guest-of-honour for the occasion.

The value of our citizens being courteous and considerate to one another cannot be measured in monetary or other easily recognisable terms. Nonetheless the benefits are real and significant. Good manners and civility will provide the social balance to our people who, over the past twenty-five years, have been preoccupied with the rough and tumble of struggling for survival. Inevitably, we picked up some callous habits as a result of having to eke out a living in a very competitive world. But as we succeed in gradually achieving a higher standard of living so too must we shed some of the brashness of a growing child and acquire the grace of a mature and cultivated society.

Next to the home and schools, the logical place to introduce a little social lubrication will be the workplace where 1.1 million Singaporeans spend nearly half their waking hours. Hence it is fitting that this year our trade union movement should help to bring the courtesy campaign to the shopfloor.

The Singaporean worker is a match for the best worker anywhere in the world based on his capacity to learn, quickness of mind and hands, sensible application of skills, and ability to grasp complex instructions or carry out intricate operations. But unfortunately, as a member of a group, the Singaporean worker rates poorly. He does not excel as a team worker compared with his counterparts in Japan and not all Singaporean workers show the willingness to work with others in order to improve the group's overall performance.

Japanese workers ...2/-

Japanese workers help one another to solve their problems at work because of the strong team spirit amongst them. When a member of their team commits a mistake, the rest of the team members will persuade him to correct it and improve himself. They will even plead for leniency from the supervisor on his behalf. In Singapore, some workers will try to find excuses to defend and cover their errors. Others resort to backstabbing to make headway in their careers. But mind you, this defect is not confined to production workers. Some supervisors and managers also resort to this unsavoury conduct.

Many of our workers prefer to work on their own. A few are even reluctant to part with their knowledge or experience to fellow workers who are less well equipped in order to be one up. Hence the sharing of experience is done with the greatest of reluctance and often only when workers are employed as instructors. Even then, it is known that some instructors do not teach their apprentices all that they know. Perhaps this is a reflection of the traditional oriental mentality when the old master keeps a trick or two up his sleeve in order to keep his students in their places. This attitude must be changed.

Being courteous and considerate to their colleagues is a start towards creating a sense of mutual concern amongst our workers. This in turn will strengthen group identity and help develop a team spirit. The thrust of this courtesy drive amongst our workforce is therefore not only to alert our workers to the finer points in inter-personal relationships but also to reduce their tendency to be individualistic. This explains our campaign theme "Courtesy Fosters Team Spirit".

To succeed in this, managers, supervisors, instructors and lead hands will have to show the way at the workplace just as teachers and parents are expected to become living examples of courteous behaviour to students in schools and children at home. On our part, the NTUC and its affiliates will cooperate with managements and other organisations to drive home to our workers the message that it is worth everyone's effort to create a courteous Singapore.

It is now my pleasure to call upon the Prime Minister to address us.