SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT INFS.OC.101/59.

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR.LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE END OF THE 1ST COURSE FOR ASSEMBLYMEN ON THE WORK OF GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES & DEPARTMENTS AT THE STAFF TRAINING SCHOOL ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1959, AT WHICH ALL INSTRUCTORS FROM THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES WHERE PRESENT.

At the end of the Second Course which will end on November 12, arrangements will be made for all the Assemblymen to be taken round the Ministries to familiarise themselves with how the Government departments work.

I have from time to time been discussing with the Assemblymen who have been attending this first course their reactions to the things they were told by the permanent officials. I think on the whole it was a valuable experience for both sides.

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On the Admin. side, I hope you have presented to the political leadership the practical administrative problems and limitations of the administrative machinery that they have inherited. It is one thing setting out revolutionary

principles. It is another thing having to use the administrative machinery that exists and despite the problems of organisation and finance which limits any revolutionary programme, to make the best of it.

In the course of these two weeks, you have got the measure of each other. The political leadership understands that they have to improve on the apparatus of the state they have inherited and work it. The administrative personnel, on the other hand, have appreciated that there are constant pressures from the ground on the political leadership. For instance, there are numerous allegations of corruption, inefficiency and injustices. Whether these are justified or not justified is one thing, but we must recognise that such a state of mind and attitude do exist.

There are two solutions to this problem. One is for us the political leadership to treat the administrative personnel as something distinct and separate from the elected Government and every time something goes wrong to blame the machinery as useless, manned by inefficient, corrupt and useless people. The political leadership can present themselves as the good fellows who wanted to do all the good things but the administrative personnel were insufficient, corrupt and incapable and have let the people down. When that happens, the civil service morale goes down and general demoralisation sets in. Finally, the administrative

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machine comes to a grinding halt. If we pursue that course, it will be disastrous in the end because the whole country will go down. Hence the alternative line we have taken, i.e. to make you understand our difficulties as mass leaders, to ask you to stiffen the organisation and increase the effort and root out corruption and slackness and after a period of readjustment, may be one year or 18 months, we should all be pulling our weight together in the same direction.

In the process of adjustment, there may be friction. There may be individual casualties, personal misfortunes and accidents. But if the administrative personnel concede that the political leadership has sincere and worthy intentions that it wants to make the democratic system work and produce results, in the end we shall resolve our difficulties and work efficiently in the interests of the people.

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For the Government, it means at the end of four to five years of our stewardship we must, through you with such stiffening of organisation and improvement in the quality of the administration, produce results - tangible results.

Next year, in the light of a year's experience, we might have a refresher course when the political leadership and the administrative personnel can freely review these problems of organisation and administration.

Finally, let me say that the political leadership is aware that, despite all the limitations of our civil service, it is still more honest and competent than most others in South-East Asia.

With the change in the constitution, the administrative personnel must always remember that the executive is now amenable to pressure from the ground. We have got not only to govern firmly but also do so with the consent of the majority of the people. This is the core of the problem. To govern firmly is quite simple. All you have got to do is to have a stout heart and a strong mind - make a decision and stick to it. It is the second aim which is difficult.

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Your role as civil servants is not only to help the Government well, but to help the Government in carrying the bulk of the people along with it. We must govern firmly, wisely, but at all times politely. That is fundamental. There are times when you have to say 'No'. But each time you say 'No' you must do it politely and, at the same time, explain why it had to be 'No'.

OCTOBER 29, 1959 (Time issued 1800 hours)

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