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BEFORE 0001 HOURS, MONDAY, MAY 16,

1960.

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW,

AT THE PASSING OUT PARADE OF THE WORK BRIGADE

AT PASIR RIS ON SUNDAY, MAY 15, 1960 AT 11 A.M.

The completion of the training of our first batch of the Work Brigade leaders is an important event. When the Work Brigade plan comes to its full fruition, it will be regarded with pride and a sense of achievement by the people of Singapore. When the first phase of development of the Work Brigade is completed in the next few years, there should be in the Brigade some 5,000 young men and women socially organised and disciplined.

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Some people have not fully understood the purpose of this Work Brigade. They think it is for unemployment relief. That is not true. It was never our intention to give unemployment relief work on the basis provided by the last government, where a whole lot of unwilling and unenergetic unemployables and

gangsters were doled out money for doing almost nothing. It is true that most of the people who will be in the Work Brigade are those who have just left school and are awaiting employment. But I wish to take this auspicious occasion to make it clear to all seeking to join the Work Brigade that the purpose of spending $7 million a year is not just to give relief work to the unemployed. Most of the 5,000 in this first phase will be young men and women who have left schools and who are marking time while they are looking for a suitable job in commerce and, we hope, more and more in industry. Rather than have them wasting their time we have decided to organise them into a Work Brigade to tap their energy and drive, their love for adventure, their sense of dedication to the country and to the cause of national construction. We know that it may be cheaper to have roads built, swamps reclaimed, irrigation canals dug by contractors using machines and contract labour. But the building of roads, reclaiming of swamps and other building projects which will be under taken by the Work Brigade is not the only objective of the Work Brigade. The more important objective is to train our youth in social organisation and discipline.

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Our purpose is to gather our young people who are awaiting employment in work camps of 50 to 100 or 150 each where they lead a corporate life, where they learn to lead and to be led, to co-operate in working, in studying and in recreation. In that time they will receive valuable training in social cohesion,

organisation and be imbued with a sense of purpose and effort in the work of national construction. It is from the ranks of the Work Brigade, from those who show qualities of leadership, initiative, drive, hard work and discipline, that we hope to recruit our best ground workers in the Government and semi-Government bodies. Once the value of this training is recognised, the Government will not be the only employer that will want to seek recruits from those who have served well in the Work Brigade. As our industrial development proceeds and the Labour Ministry is consulted more and more to supply skilled and unskilled labour for our new factories, the Work Brigade will become a valuable source of recruitment for the best type of workers. The record of performance of a member of the Work Brigade will tell us more than any recommendation on a school leaving certificate.

You are the pioneers who are forming the nucleus of this Brigade. One day when this plan has come to fruition and succeeded, the people of Singapore will not only see the building projects that you have undertaken but will look upon the Work Brigade as a dynamic organisation for the training and discipline of our youth in social co-operation and organisation. In healthy work camps such as these, in clean rural surroundings, with wholesome meals, proper work and adequate recreational facilities, they become units for the building up of the spirit of our youth. I hope that before the year is over you will have developed your

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own identity, built up you own brass band, your own recreational and cultural activities and even your own magazines and other literary activities. This is a co-operative effort in which we the Government provides you with the essentials of housing, clothing, food and material needs, sufficient work and sufficient leisure for you to develop the spirit and discipline and national consciousness of our youth. I congratulate you, and trust that you and those whom you will lead will be worthy of the high ideals which inspired this plan.

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