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SPEECH BY THE ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE,
MR. MAK PAK SHEE, AT THE CLOSING OF THE I.L.O.
SEMINAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA ON FRIDAY,
AUGUST 23, 1957

This Seminar as you are aware has been held at the request of your Governments.

Your purpose in coming to Singapore from places near and far, was to review your various experiences in the training of existing and potential supervisors in Asian countries; to appraise present programmes for the training of supervisors and to study ways and means of improving the existing programmes and of developing new ones.

In the sum total we can say that we have all gathered here to keep standards in supervisory training as high as we can.

In our activity towards this laudable objective we must note changes, and take steps to improve techniques in training, in the light of these changes. I have always been convinced, that profitable discussion among men and women is a time-honoured and well-tried technique, which is invariably fruitful.

It not only plants the seed of progress, but gives them the chance to germinate. We see the creation of records, from which, we can subsequently discover principles which escape us in our discussions, but which were in fact implicit in some of our conclusions.

Your request for this Seminar, which has been arranged by the I.L.O., has, in my mind, created for a short time, a community of men and women from distant shores to share a common life, to study common problems, to learn by study and discussion and to appreciate any shortcomings. You not only entered with enthusiasm into discussions within your own group but each group had discussions with other groups.

I am asked to deny that the marriage of groups was intended to preach any new doctrine about marriage, but it is clear that this complicated system of correlating groups to each other for a common purpose fulfils the desired function.

In the last two weeks all of you, participants and members of the panel of consultants, have been working hard. I personally regard the work which you have been doing as of great importance, not only to Singapore but to the countries which you represent. Asian countries are referred to very often as "the under-developed regions of the world".

I do not deny that - in some respects this is true, for our countries are receiving various forms of aid which we sincerely appreciate. These aids take the form of finance, technical assistance and, in this instance, assistance in the training of supervisory personnel.

The progress in the field of training in various Asian countries differs according to the various factors existing in each country. However, one very important point to note is that practically every Asian country has initiated a training programme

and as a result of this we have representatives from 13 Asian countries, the largest number that ever attended such a Seminar.

I understand that throughout your deliberations there have been numerous indications that you consider that the programmes which are currently implemented in your own countries need to be further developed and expanded.

You will all agree, I am sure, that a sharp axe merely leaning against a tree cannot cut that tree down but in order to hew it down effectively you must get hold of the handle and apply the blade with vigour and enthusiasm before you have the satisfaction of seeing the tree cut and the ground cleared.

Similarly, I appeal to you to translate your agreed ideas into dynamic action, so that all concerned can benefit from the ideas and conclusions derived by your close study of the various problems which beset supervisory training. I am sure that the implementation of the recommendations you have formulated at this Seminar for the progress in the training and development of supervisory personnel will be of importance to your respective countries.

On these occasions when I have had the privilege to be among you, I have been deeply touched by the atmosphere of extreme cordiality and friendliness. This is a happy augury for the improvement of international relationships among Asian countries.

I trust that on your return you will carry home with you such kindly feelings towards one another that you will become effective ambassadors for the building up of inter-Asian understanding and goodwill, thus developing a sound basis for Asian advancement, as part of international progress and equal respect for all Nations, however small and whatever their history of previous backwardness.

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