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SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (FOREIGN AFFAIRS), MR. ONG SOO CHUAN, AT THE CLOSING AND CERTIFICATE PRESENTATION CEREMONY FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM THE FOOD, DRINK AND ALLIED WORKERS' UNION, OF THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE AT THE NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE ON SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1978 AT 7 P.M.

It gives me great pleasure to be here this evening to officiate at the closing and certificate presentation ceremony of the leadership training course for branch committee members of the Food, Drink and Allied Workers' Union.

The training you have received during the three-week course, in labour law and in collective bargaining, are relevant to the leadership role you will play in the union. At the same time, you have been made more keenly aware of the economic development of Singapore. In the present world economic circumstance, such knowledge is vital for effective union leadership. For, today, what unions can strive to achieve for their members in terms of material advancement must take account of the economic realities facing Singapore.

The global economic outlook is uncertain. The expected recovery in 1976 was short-lived. The latest forecast for the 24 members of the OECD is a growth rate of four per cent for 1978. However, this projected growth is predicated upon the willingness and ability of the world's leading economies, namely, the United States, West Germany and Japan, to play a leading role in boosting world economic growth. So, as with previous OECD forecast, real growth may well fall short of the forecast. It is more prudent to work on the assumption of a lesser growth rate.

The economic outlook is therefore gloomy. With an open economy devoid of any natural resources, Singapore is particularly vulnerable to the effects of adverse international economic developments. To compound the problem, there is a rising protectionistic sentiment in

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the developed countries which seek to close home markets to foreign imports and prevent companies from investing abroad in order to protect jobs in their own countries.

For Singapore, the effects would be most keenly felt in the export-oriented manufacturing industries. If nothing is done, the unemployment problem could well become critical in this sector. However, if all, the government, unions or workers and employers, work together to increase productivity of our factories and firms, we can maintain that competitive edge that would enable us to minimise the ill effects of world economic forces.

It is in a way fortunate that the membership of your union belongs to the service industry. In the main, they work in hotels, restaurants and other tourist-oriented establishments.

The tourist industry in Singapore has happily weathered well the economic storms. Despite unfavourable economic conditions and uncertainties in the developed, industrialised countries which form the bulk of our tourist market, visitor arrivals to Singapore grew by 12.7 per cent bringing the total in 1977 to 1,681,985.

Tourism in Singapore will continue to flourish with the help and cooperation of your union. Everyone of your members can make a contribution. Tourists come to Singapore not only for its shopping and scenic attractions. They are impressed by the warm and friendly people they find. They appreciate efficient, honest and courteous service. Whether as chefs or as waiters and waitresses, your members can make the tourists feel welcomed as our valued guests. In this connection, I would like to urge you to call on all your members to actively support and participate in the current courtesy campaign which has the important message that "Courtesy is our way of life". It is always good to practise courtesy to our guests and to each other.

I had mentioned at the beginning about the more responsible and realistic way which unions should go about to attain their goals in the light of present day economic realities. A decade or two ago, unions strived at all costs to achieve better pay and working conditions for their members. The stronger you were, the more you got for your members. If3/-

members. If necessary, hold your employer to ransom and then extract the maximum possible advantage from him.

Such methods are entirely irrelevant and highly dangerous in the present day circumstance. There is a simpler and more effective way. It only requires of us to be that much more industrious and diligent. With industry and skills, you can help increase the size of the economic cake. Then there is more to share. The government has seen to it that increased earnings for workers accompany increased productivity by workers. You have all benefited from wage increases through the annual NWC increases. And now the government has introduced the innovative plan for workers to utilise their CPF benefits to buy shares in the Singapore Bus Company. All this is only possible because of economic growth which unions and workers together with employers and government have together brought about. So we have seen how unions can achieve their objectives in an equally effective and a more responsible way and most importantly, without doing damage to the economy.

It now remains for me to congratulate those of you who are about to receive your certificates.

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