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SPEECH BY MR SIA KAH HUI, MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE TWARO SUB-REGIONAL ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAMME AT THE NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE ON MONDAY, MAY 12, 1980, AT 10 A.M.

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The TWARO (Textile Workers - Asian Region Office) Sub-Regional on-the-job Training Programme is aimed at fostering greater understanding through the exchange of experience among TWARO affiliates in the countries with similar cultural, social, economic and trade union background. The organisers of the programme hope to achieve the objective by exposing participants to Singapore's industrial relations practice and experience, attachments to SILO/PIEU as well as cultural and social events. I am sure participants will take the opportunity to also discuss, exchange views and relate their experiences on common problems.

Such regional programmes are useful in giving trade union leaders the opportunity to acquire more knowledge and greater skills which will equip them to provide better union leadership, organisation and management, administration and communications.

It is important that trade unions provide continuing training for their leaders if they are to effectively guide their members to meet the challenges of the 80's. The decade started on a bleak note with an unhealthy international economy. Growth rate in the OECD countries this year is expected to be only one per cent, down from the 3.25 per cent last year. Inflation reached 10 per cent last year. Fuelled by the doubling in the oil prices and rises in world commodity prices last year, inflation will continue to increase and thus hamper economic recovery. The weak economic growth in the OECD countries in 1979 was a factor causing an increase in unemployment. It is unfortunate that the developed countries have opted for protectionist measures to reduce unemployment. We can expect the sombre economic conditions in the developed countries to continue in the next couple of years.

The health of the developed economies affects the growth prospects of the developing countries as the developed economies are our main suppliers of technology as well as the major markets

of our raw materials and manufactured goods. To minimise the adverse effects of the world economy, the developing countries have to create conditions conducive for successful industrialisation and agricultural growth. We have to exercise firm political will in formulating and implementing sound economic and social policies as well as work even harder towards a more equitable society.

The trade union movement can contribute significantly in co-operating with the government and employers to enhance economic growth and hence improve the living standards of workers. Tripartism has worked well in Singapore. The three parties recognise that our future economic well-being depends on the continuing expansion of our economy through accelerated industrial growth and that this objective can only be achieved through tripartite co-operation. Singapore's harmonious industrial relation is largely due to the tripartite alliance. Close consultations between parties have helped to defuse many industrial relations problems. The government has also fostered tripartism through management and trade union representation in the boards of its statutory bodies. Tripartism has seen us through the last two decades and we will continue to rely on it to meet the challenges of the 80's.

As trade union leaders at the industrial enterprise level, a thorough knowledge of the industry including prevailing conditions of employment is essential to improve the collective bargaining process. Trade union leaders should also acquaint themselves with the state of their country's economy so that their demands are in tune with the country's economic progress. Such attributes are also necessary to enable trade union leaders to effectively communicate with their members to convince and motivate them towards higher productivity and better work attitudes.

Judging by the intensive schedule drawn up, I am confident that participants would find the Sub-Regional Programme fruitful. I hope our friends from abroad will be able to find time to enjoy the sights and sample the varieties of food available here. It is my pleasure to declare open the seminar and wish it every success.
