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12-2/81/11/07

CLOSING ADDRESS BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE (LABOUR)
AND CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY BOARD, AT THE R C SEMINAR
"PROGRESS THROUGH PRODUCTIVITY" AT THE SINGAPORE CONFERENCE HALL
ON SATURDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 1981 AT 1730 HOURS

Productivity Movement

This RC Seminar is the first organised attempt to stimulate public discussion on the recommendations made by the Committee on Productivity (COP).

We thank you for your participation. You as RC representatives will play an important role in our efforts to inculcate the concept of productivity into the whole of the people of Singapore.

COP has recommended the launching of a Productivity Movement to tackle the productivity issue in its widest context under a Productivity Council. The National Productivity Council (NPC) was inaugurated on 25 September 1981.

A movement is a continuous process. The RC Seminar is but one component of this process.

Your participation is important. You have to bring home to your neighbours the concept of productivity and to convince them of its importance to Singapore's continuous survival and prosperity.

From our discussions, we have identified the following factors crucial to the success of the productivity movement.

Crucial Factors

Company Welfarism -

The emergence of a productive workforce depends on many factors. Company welfarism is one of them.

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It is so easy for politicians to offer higher and higher subsidies for state welfare benefits. But look at the poor economic conditions in Europe, where politicians have to resort to such means to keep their seats in Parliament.

At present, in Singapore many companies have established welfare benefits for their workers. Some employers have expressed interest in developing additional welfare benefits using the funds released from the reduction of the employers' CPF contributions.

As can be seen from our discussions, many of you have doubts over the implementation of this programme on company welfarism. It is natural for you to insist on safeguards in the management of the CPF funds. Let me assure you that your interest will be protected.

House Unions -

Recently there were many debates over the issue of House Unions. These debates show that there is a great deal of apprehension among the union members.

But House Unions will not retard the progress of the labour movement in Singapore. House Unions will have a more positive role to play in promoting the productivity of the company, as well as to look after the interest of their fellow members.

There will be many teething problems in the setting up of House Unions. We have to proceed with caution.

Manpower Training -

We all realise the importance of manpower training. We have encouraged our industries to automate and to mechanise. Our workers must be trained to work to their optimum capacity in such a high technology industrial environment. NPB in particular will emphasise on its training roles in the fields of personnel management, supervisory development and QC facilitators. The success of such training ultimately depends on a change of heart and a total commitment of our workers and management.

Media Promotion Of The Movement -

Promotion of productivity consciousness is a national effort. The NPC has formed a Media Consultative Committee along the lines recommended by COP. Their role is a direct contribution to nation building,

so that in the shortest possible time, every single member of our society will be inculcated with the concept of Productivity.

Productive Workforce

Human resources are our only natural resources. Our economy depends very much on foreign investments. Apart from political stability and good economic infrastructure, we have also established a harmonious industrial relations climate.

Foreign investments have increased, and in the last 15 years, we have developed a substantial industrial manufacturing base.

However, in order to continue to survive and prosper we must fight our way upwards. We must encourage our labour intensive industries to automate and to mechanise. We must develop industries with higher value added products, and an increasingly higher technological content.

We must have a productive workforce.

Only then will we attract the right investments and continue to prosper.

Conclusions

This Seminar attempts to throw open to all of us an opportunity to digest and to think over all the various problems involved in our effort to build up a productive workforce.

The worldwide inflation and its disruptive effects have led to untold miseries among some of the third world countries.

It is the Singapore Government's duty to lead our nation from falling into such a pitiful situation. In doing so, we need the commitment of every single citizen. If we are prepared to meet the challenges ahead squarely and stoutly, we will make it.
