

# Singapore Government

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Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 - TEL 3378191 ext. 352, 353, 354 / 3362207 / 3362271

Archives & Oral History Department  
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SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE (LABOUR),  
AT THE 15TH ANNUAL SPEECH AND PRIZE-GIVING DAY OF  
MONK'S HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL ON 2 OCTOBER '82 AT 4.00 PM

## INTRODUCTION

Speech Days are welcome occasions. Many of you will be receiving prizes for your performance in the examinations. The brighter students will be looking forward to further studies at the Universities and Polytechnics. Many of you may not have the chance to go for a tertiary education and you will have to look for a job.

Fortunately for you, jobs today are readily available. The Labour Force Survey (1981) showed that unemployment in 1981 was only 2.9 per cent. Most of the jobless people were below 30 years of age and had been looking for work for only a short time - the median duration of unemployment was eight weeks. Singapore has full employment. But you must not be too complacent. You have a good life. Your parents have worked hard to make sure that you have a good home, TVs to watch and telephones to use. The government has built up a stable economic infrastructure. Singapore continues to attract investments; thereby ensuring more jobs available upon your graduation. However, new investments will only be made, if we can convince our investors that our workers are amongst the best in the world.

## GOOD WORK ATTITUDES

Good workers cannot be produced in a day. It is relatively simple to teach a skill to a worker - for example carpentry, welding or brick-laying. In addition to technical skills, good workers must be inculcated with the right work attitudes. He must be able to work as a team with his fellow workers; he must understand the principles of good human relationships; and he must be able to carry out instructions from his superiors and motivate his subordinates

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to carry out his instructions. Teamwork, diligence, self-sacrifice - these are but simple examples of good work attitudes.

Such attitudes must be taught to our workers, even before they become workers, that is, when they are still students. You who are students must bear this in mind. Your education is not complete if all you worry about is passing your examinations. Your teachers are there to teach you. But besides doing well in your studies, you must also learn how to develop your character through participation in sports and other extra-curricular activities organised by the school.

### SCHOOL OBJECTIVES

You have joined a good school. I have looked through the objectives of your school and have selected four which may help you to develop good work attitudes. These four objectives are:-

- a. Pupils will be able to find their place in the world of work;
- b. Pupils will be able to get along well with others;
- c. Pupils will have good manners and morals;
- d. Pupils will know their heritage.

Let me elaborate.

#### World of Work

How can students "find their place in the world of work" when they have no experience of work? I realise that for this objective to be meaningful, "work" must not refer to gainful employment. Rather, it refers to project work or projects to keep your classes or school clean, or a fund raising project. Whatever work you refer to within a school context, I think every student realises that success only comes through team effort. Together we work better. This philosophy must be ingrained into every student.

#### Get Along With Others

In a school environment, students need to get along well with their teachers. They also need to get along well with their classmates. Otherwise, coming to class can be a chore. Later on, in your working environment, getting along well with your

follow workers, supervisors or managers means a happier working life. You must learn to give and to take. Einstein said the same thing but in more poetic language. He said "A hundred times a day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depend on the labours of other men, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same measure as I have received and am receiving".

#### Manners and Morals

I hope many of you have been following the TV series of public lectures on Confucianism. The Government has brought in these scholars to study the Singapore situation and recommend ways to encourage the study of Confucianism. Simply put, Confucianism is all about manners and morals and relationships with others. It cannot be sheer coincidence that the five dragons are among the most successful economies in the world today. The 'five dragons' is not the name of a book. It refers to Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and Singapore. The common denominator in all these countries is a positive attitude towards Confucian ethics, knowingly or unknowingly.

#### Our Heritage

It is a misconception to think that we can only talk about heritage if we have a long tradition of history. Singapore is a relatively young country. Our forefathers inherited a fishing village. Those before us developed Singapore into a metropolis - an international financial and communications centre. We have a cosmopolitan population, living peacefully together. We enjoy one of the highest living standards in Asia. Surely, this is our heritage. You who will inherit this, must never forget the fact that Singapore has survived hard times and tribulations. Today, under conditions of seeming affluence and progress, there is a tendency for some of us to slacken. This will be folly. We must even work harder to preserve what has been so painfully built up.

#### CONCLUSION

Over the next few years, competition will be keen - not only at the international market place but also within Singapore. Our students will have to compete for places in junior colleges, the polytechnics and the universities. Later on, they have to compete for jobs. .... /4.

for jobs. In a meritocracy, the best will survive. The below average must try that much harder.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Mrs Neo, the staff and students of Monk's Hill Secondary School for inviting me to be your guest-of-honour today.

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