

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE
(TRADE AND INDUSTRY), AT THE OPENING OF
THE PRODUCTIVITY MONTH AT THE SINGAPORE CONFERENCE HALL
ON FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 3.10 PM**

On behalf of the National Productivity Council (NPC), I wish to thank the Prime Minister for consenting to declare open the Productivity Month for the fourth consecutive year.

We launched the Productivity Movement in September 1981 when times were still relatively good. The real GDP growth that year was 9.9 per cent. Although business was thriving, employers saw the importance of the Productivity Movement. They gave us full support. The unions too were responsive. Together under the auspices of the NPC, employers, unions and the government, organised productivity talks, seminars and exhibitions. The importance of good labour-management relations was highlighted; the usefulness of quality control circles (QCCs) was demonstrated; and proper performance appraisal systems were introduced. These were some of the many productivity concepts that were extensively discussed at these talks and seminars. The seeds of the Productivity Movement were being planted. We thus took full advantage of the good years from 1981 to 1984 to lay the foundation for the Productivity Movement. The world recession finally caught up with Singapore in 1985.

Companies that have joined the Productivity Movement were ready to face the recession with a wide range of productivity programmes and activities. Currently, 63 companies have already implemented the Productivity Promotion through Participation (3Ps) Programme. They were encouraged to carry on with productivity campaigns of their own. There are 29 companies with Work Excellence Committees. They showed how labour and management can co-operate together to their mutual advantage. In addition, 140 organisations have set up QC Circles. The total number of QC Circles is now 3400, comprising 24,800 Circle members. Through these QC Circles, our workers are learning how to work more effectively as teams.

Companies that have participated in the Productivity Movement are in a better position to cope with the current recession. Their workers are able to put forward cost reduction programmes through their QCCs. Their managers and supervisors are able to improve on management systems to increase quality and efficiency.

Managers and supervisors are pivotal in improving the productivity of the organisations. For this reason, NPB has also concentrated on their training. In fact since 1982, NPB has trained more than 24,600 managers and supervisors. We will step up our management training programmes so that by 1987, we plan to train and retrain up to 15,000 a year.

Whether we can reap real benefits from the Productivity Movement hinges crucially on our ability to sustain it. To do that, we must reaffirm our commitment to it. We must constantly remind ourselves of the basics upon which the Movement is founded, namely, labour-management co-operation, teamwork, management productivity and the importance of training. We also need the support of more employers to participate in the Productivity Movement. After all, employers must initiate productivity programmes. Workers can then be motivated to join in such programmes.

Each year, since 1983, we have presented National Productivity Awards to companies that have participated in the Productivity Movement. To the list of the past twelve Award winners, we have added seven more this year. They are:

- (i) Apple Computers
- (ii) McDonald's
- (iii) Philips
- (iv) Singapore International Airlines (SIA)
- (v) Singapore Bus Services (SBS)
- (vi) Singapore Times
- (vii) United Overseas Bank (UOB)

This brings the number of National Productivity Award winners to a total of nineteen companies. They serve as constant reminders to the other companies of what the Productivity Movement can mean to them.

Another important basic in the Movement is the need for an integrated approach to productivity improvement i.e. one that encompasses the entire spectrum of our society and all economic organisations. In this regard, the Movement has been most fortunate to enjoy the support and participation of the employer groups, the unions and workers, the public sector and the media. May I thank you for this support. It is this same public support and participation which will sustain the Productivity Movement and bring about tangible results.

The National Productivity Council looks forward to working together with you to further the development of a highly productive workforce in Singapore. To highlight this objective, we have therefore selected as this year's Productivity Month slogan,

"Come On Singapore

- Let's All Be The Best We Can Be."

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