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SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE
(TRADE AND INDUSTRY), AT THE QUALITY DAY
AT CAIRNHILL COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON SATURDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 3.00 PM

The objective of the Productivity Movement is to help promote the growth of a more productive workforce in Singapore. Productivity is a very wide subject and means different things to different people. To a hawker frying his "kway teow", productivity means charging his customers more, and if possible, to reduce the food contents. In this way, he can earn more money. Productivity to him means more profits. Unfortunately, market forces prevent hawkers from exploiting the customers.

In order that the hawkers may optimise his profits, he has to provide good service, and good food at competitive prices. Then he will have more regular customers, more business, more turnover, and therefore higher profits - even though his margin may be smaller. That, in a way, is the essence of productivity - how to produce more, how to improve quality, and how to sell at more competitive prices.

It is easy to convey this message to individual hawkers, individual workers, or even individual employers. How to convey the same message to every worker and every employer in Singapore is the problem faced by the National Productivity Board (NPB). It is only when every member of the workforce are inculcated with this message of productivity that we can succeed in building up a highly productive workforce.

Of course, it is also possible to increase the productivity of a country by encouraging employers to buy more machinery, to automate and to mechanise. However, buying automated equipment is not a real problem especially for our multi-national corporations. They have good financial and engineering support. What is more difficult is to make sure that our MNCs and our local employers, get the support of the workers when they introduce automated machinery. After all, every worker knows that if automated machinery is introduced into the production process, fewer workers will be needed. The excess workers will have to be retrenched or retrained for other jobs. Workers will naturally react adversely to such changes. Managers and workers must learn how to adjust to these changes before automated machinery can be introduced. The National Productivity Board has therefore decided to help employers and workers to improve their productivity by emphasising on the human aspects of productivity.

Productivity depends on technology. Productivity also depends on management and on workers. NPB had previously tried to help companies improve productivity through technology --- viz., through low cost automation. This was not successful as the NPB staff had limited industrial experience. Since 1981, NPB has decided on a new strategy, viz., to help employers to increase their productivity by helping them to improve on labour-management relationships. The Productivity Movement that we have launched since 1981 has therefore been based on the importance of improving labour-management relationships as a means to higher productivity. How did we go about propagating the Productivity Movement?

First of all, the National Productivity Board has to highlight the key issues in the Productivity Movement. This was achieved through promotion. Employers, unions, and

workers were mobilised to help launch the Productivity Movement and to help bring across to the workforce the importance of good labour-management relations. The National Productivity Board help companies to form Work Excellence Committees. We promoted QC Circles. Employers recognised the usefulness of QC Circles as a means to motivate their workers, to work together as a team to improve on work efficiency and to increase their own productivity. We encouraged companies to implement Productivity Promotion Programmes (3Ps). We emphasised on the training of managers and supervisors as a pillar of management productivity. We tried to instill into Singapore the concept of a training tradition.

We have also sought the assistance of grassroot organisations to help propagate the Productivity Movement to every community centre and to every home. Productivity programmes for grassroot organisations are carried out mainly during the month of November, which is officially designated as Productivity Month. Since 1982 Productivity Month has been officially launched by our Prime Minister. During Productivity Month grassroot organisations are mobilised to organise activities such as seminars, talks and exhibitions.

This year the emphasis is on quality improvement and cost reduction. These themes will be presented at the Quality Day activities organised in five constituencies, viz.,

- (1) Cairnhill
- (2) Marine Parade
- (3) Tiong Bahru
- (4) Boon Lay, and
- (5) Kebun Baru

The emphasis of Quality Day is on topics relevant to daily living, for example, how to shop wisely and how to plan your time at home. Through Quality Day activities, we will emphasise to our citizens that productivity attitudes and habits can best be developed in their homes and in their daily activities. We hope you will benefit from the Quality Day activities and on this note, I am pleased to declare the forum open.

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