

Singapore Government

18 DEC 1985

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 061 / Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

SS WEE-6

Release No.: 96/NOV
02-3/85/11/30

SPEECH BY DR WAN SOON BEE, MINISTER OF STATE
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), AT THE UNION OF
TELECOMMUNICATIONS EMPLOYEES OF SINGAPORE
(UTES) PRODUCTIVITY TALK AT HOTEL MERIDIEN
ON SATURDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 9.00 AM

I am pleased to note that the Union of Telecoms Employees of Singapore has once again initiated a productivity campaign with the view to achieve even higher productivity among the members.

Productivity is everybody's business. The will to strive for higher productivity must be imbued in the minds of every Singaporean.

We must all realise that productivity is the key to our future success and progress.

During this morning's sessions I am sure you will examine ways by which productivity can be enhanced and how the productivity concepts can be translated into actions that produce results. To excel in whatever you do is certainly an approach to higher productivity, thus your theme for today "Professionalism - An Approach to Work Excellence" is certainly an apt subject for deliberation.

It is appropriate for me at this stage to remind ourselves as to why productivity is the only road to success for us. There are three good reasons:

Firstly, it is only through higher productivity that we can better the standard of living of our people.

Secondly, we need to have higher productivity in order to maintain or improve our growth rates and output.

Our indigenous workforce growth is expected to be only one per cent annually and this will not help increase our Gross Domestic Product by very much, unless we are more productive. If we work hard and smart, all our individual productivity gains will add up to a significant growth in our real GDP.

Thirdly, we must be competitive in the world market. Through higher productivity the unit cost of our products and services can be reduced to help us to compete more effectively.

Having come to this stage in our economic growth and progress as an independent state, we would not want to backslide in any way.

Singaporeans are more fortunate than many other people in the world and enjoy a high standard of living.

We should therefore put in more efforts to maintain our standard of living and ensure the same for our future generations.

It is for this reason that the government, employers and trade unions are paying great emphasis to productivity growth.

We can achieve higher productivity gains in many ways.

Our unions will continue to act responsibly and promote good labour-management relations. A peaceful labour scene ensures orderly economic growth.

All workers must adopt good work attitudes and be prepared to upgrade their skills and adapt as work situations change in response to technological advances. A trained and skilled workforce is a productive workforce.

It is therefore of paramount importance that our workers should aspire for higher skills and raise their levels of education.

There must be concerted efforts from workers, management and government to achieve all this.

However, I must stress that management has a very important role in the productivity drive. Management must lead and provide the impetus for productivity growth at their workplaces.

While management has a leadership role in promoting higher productivity the workers too must play their part and respond positively to any genuine productivity efforts.

I congratulate the leaders and members of UTES for once again demonstrating their desire for professionalism and their wholehearted support for work excellence and productivity. Their organisation of this Productivity Talk is an exemplary response from organised labour to a national goal and I wish you all success and fruitful results in your deliberations and discussions today.

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