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Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel: 3378191 ext. 352, 353, 354/3362207/3362271

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SPEECH BY MR EUGENE YAP, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (LABOUR) AND
MP FOR MOUNTBATTEN, AT THE NATIONAL DAY DINNER AT OASIS
RESTAURANT ON FRIDAY, 7 AUGUST 1981 AT 7.30 PM

Have a look around you, you see building complexes, broad, smooth, well-structured highways and flyovers including viaducts, each of ultra-modern architectural design and built with the latest engineering technology - our latest landmark is, of course, the Changi International Airport. These are all symbols of Modern Singapore and they remind us of Singapore's ever conscious efforts to meet the needs of the future, the 90's and beyond. For this reason, many of our industrial estates are now adjusting and preparing to produce the higher value added products of high technology in increasingly more automated surroundings.

Our efforts, so far, have been most satisfactory, largely perhaps because we had been able to work very closely together - the people and the Government. To continue to do well, we need to further develop our rather limited human resource. It is compulsory for us to maximize our human efforts because we have now arrived at a point of time where, more than ever before, we have to work more closely together to achieve greater economic development, to increase productivity in order that we can survive well. In the past, we succeeded in tackling the problems of public housing, unemployment and the oil crisis. This is mainly the result of our unique system of tripartism of Government, employer and employee at a rather high level. From now on, this same spirit of teamwork must permeate all levels of society.

For the next decade, we must consciously strive to make teamwork our daily habit because it will be our key to the future. Good teamwork is a way to ensure greater productivity. An individual, no matter how good, has limited powers, but as part of a working group, properly motivated, he and his team can achieve much.

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Competition will get keener as we progress because others around us will also be progressing. We do not have any material resource and therefore the common sense thing for us to do is to maximize our human efforts to increase productivity. We cannot afford wastage or slackness. We simply have to work well together. We must build our human resource up to perfection. To achieve higher productivity, we have to cultivate the spirit of perfect teamwork. Of course, this must never be done in ways that may alienate other departments or other groups. The interest and progress of the organization must be foremost in the minds of everyone.

At this point of time, it may be a good idea for us to pause for a while and take a look at the ant and see what we can learn from it. Insignificant though these insects may be, they have a fantastic organization in which every ant is part of a perfect working team. Every ant has its role in the group, doing well what it must instinctively, and thus it is no wonder that they form the most numerous species on earth. They have worked out their survival all too successfully with a finely developed system of division of labour. There is even sacrifice involved - but the system has ensured the survival of the ants. So we can learn too from the members of the lower order of insects - their perfect co-ordination, their superb teamwork.

Similarly in our society, every individual has a place in it, everyone can carve out for himself a specific role within it. In order to ensure that our country survives well in the future, every member must be sensitive to the part he has to play in the society. This role is one of co-operation within the group. It calls for a certain amount of change within us, to develop a habit of teamwork and to think of others as we would ourselves. If we can master this, then we should succeed.

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