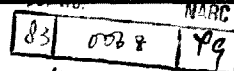


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**SPEECH BY MR EUGENE YAP, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (LABOUR),
AT THE NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE CEREMONY AT HELI ORIENT + PAS
ORIENT (COD), SELETAR AIRFIELD EAST CAMP
ON WEDNESDAY, 10 AUGUST 1983 AT 8.30 AM**

There is so much wisdom in the saying "Seeing is Believing". But "seeing is believing" can also be rather harmful, sometimes very damaging. Perhaps I can give an example here.

Ever so often, all those unending exhortations on the importance of working safely seem to fall on deaf ears until a fatal accident happens. When that happens, the family of the deceased usually suffers, especially if he is the sole breadwinner. The employer suffers loss of time because work has to stop for investigation into the accident which means loss of money. This is a very painful experience for both worker and the employer and is not worthwhile to wait and see in order to believe.

There are many situations in life when warnings and signals must be heeded to immediately. We all have been given words of advice and signals of different kinds at different times by the Government. The latest signal is "We must work harder and smarter" so that we can help to increase productivity and make our goods more competitive. I believe this message has been heard loud enough but the sad thing is that some workers still believe that productivity does not benefit them. Some workers believe that if they work harder and smarter, it only benefits their employers. If you think hard enough, you will discover that increasing productivity secures your job.

Multi-national companies and local entrepreneurs invest their money in Singapore because they expect to make profits. But if they find that our workers are not able to live up to their expectations and are costly to maintain, they will not hesitate to close shop, pack up and invest their money elsewhere. When this happens, you lose your job and may not be able to pay for or maintain your homes. In better days, it takes a shorter time for a retrenched worker to find a job, but if economic conditions do not improve, it may take a longer time which will therefore affect our income and our families. The way to secure our job and therefore be able to pay for the homes we buy and maintain a happy family is for workers not only in this company but for all workers in Singapore to make a resolution on our 18th National Day to work harder and smarter together. We must strive for zero defect and make our products competitive in international markets. If we can achieve this, the companies we work for will be able to earn profits and support us and our families. If we cannot, companies will close, we will go out of jobs. Let us therefore not adopt a "wait and see" attitude. Instead, we must seriously heed the Government's exhortation to work effectively as a team with management. We must work with management like the way our right leg co-ordinates with our left leg to carry the company we work for successfully into the future.

Look at the Americans. Listen to what they said some years ago. In those days, American workers were very militant. They called their bosses names. They thought the company they worked for was exploiting them. They went on strike for any small dispute between management and workers. All these unwelcome remarks and actions were due to a work system which has become obsolete today. What happened? One company after another closed down and when

the American workers saw what happened, they got wise to the situation. Today, they are saying quite different things like:-

- "Let us work with management",
- "Let us return some of our salary to management",
- "Let us work in a team with management",
- "Let us work harder and smarter".

With such a living example in front of us, we must not fall into the same trap as the American workers. If we do, it will be disastrous for us. The Americans may afford to make more mistakes than we can. We must therefore avoid mistakes by learning from other people's mistakes. We are too small an island. This is the reason why Government keeps reminding workers and management to work closely in a team. Signals, messages and exhortations have been sent out by the Government, let us heed them, let us not be foolish enough to disregard the danger signals.

This reminds me of the sinking of a very large ship. In 1912, the finest and safest vessel that has been built, the unsinkable Titanic, struck an iceberg and sank with pretty nearly everybody on board. The staggering fact is not that the ship sank but she sank after 15 hours of radio warnings, her engines at full speed, her band playing, her passengers dancing and apparently nobody cared one bit that there was danger, that there was iceberg ahead. Let us not suffer a similar fate - warnings everywhere, engines at full speed, bands playing, passengers dancing and no Singaporean caring at all.

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