

Blur white collar v blue line

THE current discussion on growing Singapore with a big shift in productivity is an attitudinal one as well.

The line separating white and blue collar workers is too stark in Singapore. Many adults and teenagers have a mental list of jobs they deem too lowly for them.

There is a privileged attitude that unnecessarily puts some jobs (and people) down. Once this attitude takes root, no Singaporean will want those jobs and we will continue to rely on foreign workers.

If business owners and PMETs (professionals, managers, executives and technicians) consider doing "work not equal to their standing", and in fact take pride in it, we will have subordi-

nates more respectful of their supervisors and a more cohesive workplace.

I am not saying they should spend all their time on menial tasks, for that will subvert productivity, but such tasks should not be treated as beneath their dignity.

Imagine an engineer demonstrating to workers a particularly tricky process; or a restaurant manager taking his turn to wash the toilets; or a bank manager doubling as a front-line teller during peak hours; or a teacher cleaning the classroom with his students.

The impact will be tremendous. Will these people bristle at the mere suggestion? That is my point.

Productivity has much to do with job design.

While lower-skilled workers should upgrade their skills to handle a wider range of work, the policy should work both ways.

Those higher in rank should also take a turn at work on the ground, regularly. There are valuable insights to be gleaned.

If the current attitude is not reversed, teenagers and children will never learn to respect equality for all.

How then can we ever be a truly gracious First World country that loves the least privileged in our midst?

Leong Sun Yee (Madam)

WRITE IN

LETTERS should be sent only to The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit a letter. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg.