SYNOPSIS

Chapter I - Introduction

The regional developments postulated for the socio-economic advancement of the nation, by the new concept plan of Singapore inevitably requires the clearance of the settlers from the rural areas affected. A large portion of these rural settlers depend on land for a livelihood and their clearance and resettlement requires an immediate provision of alternative suitable rural land, otherwise the settlers may lose their livelihood and thus affect the well being of their families. These rural settlers generally experience a low level of literacy and have conservative values of life, which make them not so susceptible to changed social and physical environments. As a result they resist the clearance process thereby unduly delaying the development programmes. It therefore necessitates the planners concerned with the regional developments to plan and guide the rural resettlement and to ensure that the required clearance of rural settlers is accomplished. Although expediting the clearance process is the main concern, it is essential that the resettlement practice provides the needs of the various categories of affected rural settlers without jeopardising the objectives of the future role of the rural sector.

The dissertation identifies the present rural resettlement problem, formulates planning strategies to facilitate the rural resettlement and recommends a resettlement practice for the future.
CHAPTER II — The present resettlement problems

The present low rate of clearance of rural settlers from the rural areas required for development, results from the resistance offered by the rural settlers to move. Although the present resettlement practice has encouraged urbanisation among part-time farmers by providing replacement grants and higher cash compensation at replacement rates for the land occupied and the improvement thereof, the inducement has not been attractive enough to the farmers due to the high cost of alternative urban accommodation. Most of the rural settlers are also not equipped for urban jobs or for the urban way of life. The Resettlement Department at present does not provide adequate assistance to the rural settlers to start a new livelihood.

Majority of the affected rural settlers, unable to urbanise, thus opt for land allocation in the resettlement areas. In a land scarce country like ours, the creation of additional resettlement areas is restrictive due to the competitive pressures for land by other land uses and due to the high cost of land. In the last decade, the cost of land and development increased from $3,000 to $10,500 per acre. As a result of this increase in the cost of land and development, the resettlement practice limits the size of the farm plot to a maximum of two acres. The average size of the farm plots in the resettlement areas however has proved inadequate for large scale rural activities and have thus resulted in low farm productivity. The low farm productivity and the general low level of households income is also attributed to the fact that the resettlement areas have very small group of economic active persons compared to Singapore as a whole.
The present farming practices of the resettlement areas have only 1/5 of the productivity attained in the remaining rural areas of Singapore and have thus resulted in poor land utilisation.

The new concept plan of Singapore has activities. These areas can conveniently accommodate all the 30,000 farmers of Singapore. However, this would create a large class of small scale farmers. The inclusion of non viable farmers into the rural areas would eventuate in poor land utilisation.

The present resettlement practice therefore is not only undesirable socially and economically but it is unlikely to achieve the required clearance of rural settlers and would thus hamper the development programme.

Chapter III

To expedite the clearance and to facilitate the resettlement process, the needs of every category of rural settlers must be considered and provided. Generally there are three categories of rural settlers identified as below:

(a) Farmers likely to urbanise;

(b) Farmers likely to continue intensive agricultural activities; and

(c) Farmers unlikely to urbanise and unlikely to pursue intensive agricultural activities.

The first category of rural settlers should be given every facility and assistance to enable them to urbanise. The low rate of urbanisation in the past was caused by their lack of knowledge and
skills of the urban way of life. Those rural people must therefore be educated and trained to assimilate with the urban society. A higher cash compensation of at least one year loss farm productivity is recommended for rural settlers urbanising so that they are financially secured to start a new livelihood.

The second category of rural settlers should be provided with relevant training to equip them the knowledge and technique to achieve a high farm productivity. The training provided should of course be in line with the objectives of the future role of the rural sector.

Although the rural sector of Singapore has never played an important role in the economic development of the nation in the past, the sector has currently developed some viable rural activities like pig rearing and poultry farming. These two activities have great potential for further expansions. It is recommended that the future rural sector be developed into economically advanced sector. To enable the sector to advance, the development of an agribusiness sub-sector should be promoted.

The clearance and resettlement of rural settlers requiring to continue the rural activities should be done by a competent authority and thus the Primary Production Department is suggested. The Primary Production Department should therefore provide the assistance and facilities required by those rural settlers.

The third category of the rural pose a clearance and resettlement problem, as they can neither urbanise nor increase high farm productivity. This category forms about 15 per cent of the
total rural farming population and as this category is fast disappearing only some temporary provision is required. Special farm neighbourhoods with cheap accommodation in a rural environment is recommended. The farm neighbourhoods would be provided with small farm plots for the part-time activities of these settlers. However, the neighbourhood design would be flexible so that when this category disappears the neighbourhood could accommodate an urban population.

Chapter IV

The success of clearance depend on the assistance and facilities provided by the Resettlement and Primary Production Departments. In order to facilitate the assistance, the Primary Production Department should be responsible for the general administration and development of the designated rural areas in the concept plan. The rural areas should be developed with all amenities and zoned for different agricultural activities according to the potentials of the area. Such zonation of uses would not only ensure a high agricultural productivity but would also facilitate the administration and assistance service provided by the Primary Production Department to the settlers. The farmers, would be sold farm plots of a size and in a locality depending on the scale and type of rural activities they pursue.

The Primary Production Department to assist the development of the agribusiness subsector would promote the growth of a new farm entrepreneur. Some of the existing rural centres located at strategic location in the rural areas of Singapore could be developed in the proposed agribusiness centres. On the periphery of these agribusiness centres the proposed farm neighbourhood should be developed by the
Primary Production Department for the rural settlers unable to urbanise or increase farm productivity. The farm neighbourhood located close to the centre while experiencing a rural physical environment, would receive all the urban services and amenities.

The Resettlement Department would also establish a division to assist the rural settlers urbanising to start a new livelihood. This division would not only provide training and loans to the settlers but would provide them urban accommodation for both living and business in the numerous neighbourhoods being built by Housing and Development Board currently.

In order to ensure the development of the rural sector before the end of the century, it is suggested that clearance and resettlement of all rural settlers is achieved within 20 years.