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SPEECH BY MR S DHANABALAN, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER FOR CULTURE, AT THE OPENING OF THE RC CENTRE AT ST GEORGE'S ROAD

ON 1 JANUARY 1983 AT 7.30 PM

The Residents Committee is an attempt by the people living in HDB flats to help themselves in improving and maintaining their environment. The Residents Committee assists in developing a healthy physical as well as social environment.

In most HDB flats, people conduct most, if not all, their activity inside the flat. When they lived in a kampong or squatter area or even in an urban slum area this was not so. Living space was so cramped that much of the daily activity took place in the street or in some other common area. The living conditions forced closer social interaction. There were of course many problems in such crowded living conditions. But there were also compensations as people knew each other well and there was a close sense of community. With the exception of one-room flats, most HDB dwellers spend their time behind closed doors when they are at home. Thus a special attempt has to be made to build up a community spirit to create a sense of belonging, a sense of responsibility to the neighbours and care and concern for the neighbours and the environment. High rise dwelling also requires a greater discipline on the part of the residents. Without such discipline and consideration for the neighbours, life can become intolerable. It is in this sphere of improving cooperation among the residents and encouraging greater consideration for each other's needs that the Residents Committees play a vital role.

For the Residents Committee to be effective, it must have a variety of talents. There must be members who can conceptualize and anticipate problems, members who can make overall plans, members who

establish easy personal relations in their sail/ dealings with the residents, members who can organize and implement specific projects, members who can land a sympathetic car to the problems of the residents and so on. The Rosidents Committee nouds members with a variety of educational and professional background and a word by the aptitudes and interests. Thus in any one zone which is encommassed by a Residents Committee, there must be different typed of flats and residents. There must be a good mixture of the small flats and the four or five-room and even HUDC type of flats. It is important that the bigger and better flats are not isolated into enclaves. The residents of such enclaves will then not be able to contribute actively to the betterment of those who are not so well off. In addition living in such enclaves gives the residents a distorted idea of the emphasize the society and nation. It is for this reason that the gove, must his decided that MUDC's operations should be taken over by the TFB and that in future HUDC type of flats should be developed as an integral part of HDP's development.

In our meritocratic system, everybody has the apportunity to rise in society. But those who really do well in the professions and in business will always be a minority. For example, in 1981, there ware only about 100,000 GPF contributors who carmed hore than \$1,500 per month but of a total of about 940,000 ChF contributors. Or as another example, only 63,000 resident taxpayers had an appeared income of more than \$20,000 per year out of a total of 518,000 such tempayers. But this minority is an important minority and must be obtively becolved in community leadership. People belonging to this group must identify their interest with the rest of the community. Thus this minority of well-off people are divorced from the problems, problems and interests of the majority of the population, they became sulfich and develop distorted values. Let me quote seme examples of such distorted values. I remember talking to a HK businessman who told no that he use his family profer to live in Singapore because there is no need for him or his wife to be involved in the inane activities of what passus for high society in HK. He told no that there are restaurants in W. where the prices are astronomical and have little relation to either the quality of the food or the service. But such restaurants are never short if customers as businessmen patronise them to show the business community that they are

doing well and that they can afford such expensive restaurants. In fact I was told that if a businessman is not seen in such a rectaurant regularly, word posses round among the creditors that concething is wrong and he starts to have difficulties with his benkers, creditors and suppliers. In other words there must be a flausting of wealth to prove that one is doing well financially.

I note that this HK syndrome is spreading to Singapore and some posturants in Singapore are taking pains to build us a reputation as being very expensive and some businesseen take pride in being seen to entertain in these costaurants. Advertishing are also increasingly appealing to such warped values when they provide a product as desirable because it is so expensive that only for our offerd it. Thus we have asining advertisements to make tight fittling joins with gold and diamond losses as something desirable. We can do without such measures of success. These who try to impress by such displays of affluence should be held up to ridicule and contempt by the maps of society.

When people start applying such warped values in judging others, it can lead to bizabre conclusions. It was recommised to be lately that a very successful but humble local accommised fooded to trevel by bus one day when his car was in the workshop. Being will-brown, he was recognised by two passencers in the bus and or that he asying to another "Say, isn't that Mr 42 Mie business must be in the uble for him to travel by bus." Thus far from being correspond for using public transport and thus easing the traffic problem, he was suspected of having fallen on hard times.

The danger of the upper and middle income groups developing such distorted values is all the greater if they appreciate the solves into little enclaves. They must become closely involved with the problems of the lower income groups. They must share their browledge and expertise in every effort to improve the others in the community who are less well endowed. This is not only morally right but is in the wider and long term interest of those who are affluent. A circle experience of the problems of the lower income group will have a schering effect on unrealistic expectations of the affluent.

For the RCs to become vital and dynamic agents for bettering society through self help, the better educated and more successful members of the community must get involved in the leadership and the projects of the Residents Committees. Only in this way can we build a more stable and healthy society.