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**SPEECH BY MR HO KAH LEONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION), AT FAIRFIELD METHODIST SECONDARY SCHOOL'S 95TH
ANNIVERSARY DINNER AT THE SHANGRI-LA ISLAND BALLROOM ON
THURSDAY, 4 AUGUST 1983 AT 8.00 PM**

I am very happy to be able to share your joy in celebrating Fairfield Methodist Secondary School's 95th Anniversary tonight. This year's celebration is especially significant, in that it marks the beginning of a new era in the history of the school.

In the 1880's, the development of education in Singapore was in a state of laissez-faire. There was no definite education policy, nor was there any public control of schools. Education was developed with no planning or organisation. Schools of various kinds sprang up: some were short-lived and disappeared after a few years, some lingered on for a while longer, and others carried on until today to become the forerunners of schools which have formed an integral and valuable part of our education system.

Fairfield Methodist Secondary School, then known as Fairfield Girls' School, is among the aided English schools with a long tradition established by the missionary bodies in the early years. It was founded by the Methodist Mission in 1888. The school was then housed at Cross Street with only eight girls. The founder, Miss Blackmore, had difficulty in convincing the local Chinese community of the advantages for their daughters to be educated in school. It was the mistaken belief that education was necessary only for boys in the family. Over the years, as the enrolment expanded and the demand for places increased, the school found its accommodation and facilities stretched to the

limit. It was operating under very trying conditions and in a very poor learning environment.

In our society, as in elsewhere, any change is looked upon as a threat to the established tradition, and arouses anxiety and concern. But change is unavoidable and necessary for progress. It is no longer possible to think of a school in terms of traditional arrangements which are handed down from one generation to another. It has to involve itself in the process of change to meet new educational and social needs. The acceptance of boys by Fairfield Methodist Girls' School into its traditionally all-girl domain was not an easy decision. This bold and far-sighted decision has made Fairfield the first girl mission school in Singapore to go co-educational.

With the re-siting of the school at Dover Road, a new era in the long history of Fairfield Methodist Girls' School began on 3 January 1983. The Primary and Secondary sections are now functioned as two separate schools, taking in both boys and girls. The two new schools are very well equipped and have many facilities to cater for the needs of the pupils for an all round education. The school environment is pleasant and conducive to learning.

Fairfield Methodist Secondary School has developed a strong Christian tradition and a good community spirit among the staff and pupils. Despite the lack of facilities in the old premises, the school has been able to maintain good academic achievements. The continued popularity of the school is evidence of the confidence and trust the parents have in the school. In the new premises, with the excellent physical facilities and a corps of highly dedicated staff, I am sure the school will make even greater success in both the academic area and ECA.

With this note, may I wish you continued success in all your endeavours in the future. #####