

SPEECH BY THE HON. MR. J.M. JUMABHOY AT THE OPENING
OF THE ROTARY CLUB'S HOBBIES EXHIBITION AT THE
VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL ON TUESDAY, MAY 28,
1957, AT 5 P.M.

With the dawn of reasoning there was born within man an irresistible desire - a craving for self expression. This desire, this craving for self-expression, found its fulfilment through another impulse - an impulse to create, so that through the medium of creating man found expression of his personality, of his individual self.

Thus through all ages you have had men and women from all walks of life - businessmen, clerks, workers, students - taking a little time off from their normal pursuits to devote to some pet hobby - be it painting or sculpture, writing poetry or composing music - and as a result of their hobby enriching the world with a wealth of treasures of Art.

It is true, of course, that not all hobbies are inspired by the desire for self-expression. In the present day material world with its mass production tendencies and changed sense of values, expression of the individual has somewhat receded into the background. The urge to create is still there as strong as ever, but in the case of some persons the incentive for a hobby is more a feeling of pride at possessing a collection.

However, whatever it is that motivates a person to have a hobby, the important thing is that he follows his own individual inclination. There is no compulsion to have a hobby or to have any particular hobby. Whatever hobby a person takes to, he creates a little world in which he seeks his own enjoyment, and the fulfilment of his desires, and in the process enriches the world in some way or other.

Now, of exhibitions there seems to be no end. But this particular Exhibition, because it is an exhibition of hobbies, is not only unique in Singapore but also important since it will encourage interest in hobbies. The Rotary Club, and particularly Mr. Cresson, the chief organiser, are to be congratulated for giving the lead for such an unusual exhibition.

My pleasure in performing this opening ceremony today is however tinged with some slight regret that the Rotary Club has shown discrimination against one of the most active and most publicised hobbies in the Colony - the hobby of politics. I am sure a section on what has been called the easy and carefree hobby of politics would have been very interesting - particularly so if some of it was devoted to "despotic" Ministers and more particularly to somersaulting acrobat politicians.

This Exhibition is significant for two reasons. The first reason is that it will serve to bring to light the tremendous inherent talent and craftsmanship that is hidden within the population of Singapore and of which the public knows very little. Perhaps some of this talent or craftsmanship could be commercialised to an extent where they could form a major handicraft or cottage industry. I know this sounds terribly mercenary, but then as I said earlier the world has changed and you cannot blame a Minister who has industry in his portfolio to be practical in outlook when such a potential is concerned.

I may be optimistic but, perhaps, this Exhibition might point out some way of gainfully employing some of our increasing population who are not otherwise employed. The second reason is that it is put up in pursuit of a well-known hobby of the Rotary Club, that is to collect funds for deserving charities. As the Chief Minister said the other day, there seems to be no limit to the ability of the Rotary Club to find new ways of raising money and new purposes on which to spend it. The money that will be raised from this Exhibition will be divided between two of their projects, or shall I say, in this context, their hobby horses - the first is the Village Adoption Scheme by which the Rotary Club is adopting the village of Kampong Teban, off Jurong Road, in order to help the villagers to make a better community of their village. The Club has already raised \$5,000/- through the painless extraction method of its President, which is well-known to all members.

Even I as a member of the Rotary Club have not been able to escape! I do hope that the Club will be able to raise the necessary \$10,000/- for this project. The other half of the proceeds will go to the Deaf and Dumb Association. The Rotary Club has already given \$25,000/- to this Association and we hope that they will raise sufficient funds from this Exhibition to build a special Rotary Wing in the School for the Deaf and Dumb which the Association is building.

I know you have come here for your pleasure but we prefer it when our pleasure has a certain element of purpose added to it. When we can think that we are encouraging among all classes the pursuit of hobbies, when we can think of the advantages which will derive to the village of Kampong Teban and to the deaf and dumb as a result of the proceeds of this Exhibition, I am sure you will agree that duty and pleasure are well blended today and that it is your wish that I should without further delay declare this exhibition open and lead you to see the exhibits laid out for our delight.

I, therefore, have pleasure in declaring the Rotary Hobbies Exhibition open.

MAY 28, 1957.

(Time issued - 1515 hours.)