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**SPEECH BY MR EUGENE YAP, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (LABOUR),
AT THE LAUNCHING OF "CARE, SAVE AND SHARE" PROJECT
OF KALLANG PRIMARY SCHOOL
ON FRIDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 1984 AT 9.00 AM**

Once in a while during my meet-the-people sessions, I come across cases that can be very, very depressing.

One evening, a rather elderly woman came desperately to seek my assistance to get her husband released from a drug rehabilitation centre. He had somehow got himself hooked on drugs. As she related her predicament to me, I could immediately see that she had been dogged by one tragedy after another. In her younger days when she first met the man of her life and gave herself in marriage to him, she did not foresee what lay in the future for her and her family. Then, everything seemed bright and rosy, especially at the birth of her first child. Then too she could probably have vowed to do all she could to raise him up to be somebody. Today, all her efforts, all her hopes for her son have been shattered by just one miserable incident.

It so happened, one day, her son had just returned from an afternoon shift. It was 11.30 in the night. He received a phone call from a friend who said he desperately needed help. They were to meet in a coffee shop. Despite his tiredness and hunger, despite the rain and thunder, he hurriedly dashed off to his friend to render whatever assistance was required, only to be brutally struck to death with a wooden stool by someone unknown. Was he or was he not associated with bad company that caused his ill-fated death?

Now, there is no one left in the home to work and earn to pay the rent, the electricity and water bills, provisions and so on. Despite her age, she has to go out and do something to maintain the home. Her husband had for one reason or another, become addicted to drugs. To let him out prematurely would be doing him and society the greatest disservice. He had to serve out his rehabilitation period. The question: Why should such a misfortune befall this family? Could this be due to the man of the house who got himself hooked on drugs, for who can a young son turn to when his father is on drugs? Or who can a young boy look up to or learn from when the father is on drugs?

Children of all ages need someone to turn to, somebody to emulate. Parents and teachers are the ones they look up to. But when adults whom youngsters turn to for help, have their own problems, like drugs or alcoholism, then the very existence of the family and the development of the child would be threatened. They did a calculation in the United States and found that problems of drug-taking, alcoholism and so on, cost society billions of dollars. Singapore cannot afford to waste precious assets.

Therefore, I am very happy that the Principal and teachers of this School have launched this ingenious 'CARE, SAVE AND SHARE' programme. I can see the usefulness, the potential of this programme to save many an innocent child from going astray.

First, the children will gain directly by deriving both pleasure and knowledge from the items that are being shared. Books, toys, clothes or whatever will be fully utilized as they should be, and not wasted. This way, children learn to care for those around them. The more successful ones learn to bring the less successful up with them. This is a quality we must nurture in order to build up a strong society. Furthermore, unlike children in many other countries, our children are generally better off.

They get what they want because their parents are ambitious and want them to do well. But as we provide them with the best in life, the ugly side of it all, is the tendency to take things for granted and waste and go on wasting. This scheme that is launched today can help to arrest the development of such bad habits, as it inculcates in the child a sense of respect or concern for everything, living or non-living, private or public, and save it from suffering an unpleasant fate, destruction or waste.

Secondly, the parents who are the providers of these items can experience the satisfaction of knowing that they are becoming actively involved in a community programme which should generally help to upgrade the overall welfare and performance of the community they live in. It is like one whole, big team of parents coming together through this programme to help bring up one whole, big group of future citizenry, where every individual will be assisted to perform better than had he been left on his own to develop. This scheme therefore allows parents the opportunity to help other children, besides their own not forgetting that their own children will also be helped in the process. In this way, parents enjoy a greater advantage of wealth and education. They can contribute significantly in raising the future citizenry without any extra effort and find themselves playing a more fulfilling and meaningful role within their society.

I am confident that all the other primary schools in this constituency, the principals of which I have met regularly and are very enlightened people, will also consider other programmes to help our young develop. Together we all can raise the physical and moral well-being of our young and ensure a better citizenry for the future. Let us strive to achieve this end.