

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

Speech by Encik Othman Wok, Minister for Social Affairs, at the Baby Show Prize-giving Ceremony at the Zehnder Road Community Centre on 6 Jul 75 at 12.30 pm

Mr Chairman, Ladies & Gentlemen

The Management Committee and the staff of the Zehnder Road Community Centre should be commended for organising this Baby Show. As a result of the good response from parents in this Constituency, the Baby Show has been held annually since 1971, and I am confident that it will continue to be a regular highlight in the programme of activities run by the Community Centre.

2 The Baby Show is perhaps an indication of our deep interest in the coming generations. We have every reason to focus our attention on the young children because they reflect our hope for the future. It is our responsibility to provide for every child, the best possible environment for his physical, intellectual and moral development. This is because we do not merely want to propagate the human race, but more important, we wish to ensure the progress of our society.

3 Parents can influence the course of future generations by the way they bring up their children. Psychologists believe that the most important stage in a child's development is between

the age of three months and six years. It is during this time that their future mental and social attitudes are shaped. It is utterly vital for parents to show by example how mature adults should behave because a child learns much by observation and imitation during this impressionable period. Parents who are loving, kind and honest will transmit such virtues to their children more effectively than those who do not practise what they preach. A child will have his first experience of social intercourse in the home environment, and it is essential for him to acquire a sense of right and wrong from the very start. Parents must take the time and trouble to inculcate in their children the habits and attitudes which are socially acceptable, and teach them to respect the needs and rights of other people.

4 To discharge their responsibilities, parents must have the means and the time to do so. Although most animals suckle their young, only human beings can really care for their children and plan for their future. However, to bring up a baby well is not an easy task. It demands great effort, devotion, discipline and a dash of wisdom to look after and guide our children. Our main concern is to ensure that the people we bring into the world can enjoy a decent life with ample opportunities to develop

their talents and potentialities.

5 Singapore is a small island with 586 square kilometres.

This includes the off-shore islands and the recent reclamation of land. We now have a population of 2.2 million and the majority of our citizens are young people who will soon attain marriageable age. The implication of this is that the population will continue growing unless steps are taken to prevent a population explosion.

We do not want our children to grow up in an over-crowded environment with all the concomitant ills of congestion. Hence, we have intensified our family planning campaign to achieve the desired norm of a two-child family so that hopefully the population can be stabilised at four million by the twenty-first century.

Parents must play their part in this programme and accept the necessity to limit the size of their family for the good of all. By practising family planning, they can also devote greater care and attention to each child, and the nett result will be a more happy society with sufficient opportunities for all.

6 The greatness of man is his ability to determine his own destiny. We can now ensure that every baby born to us is a wanted child and to provide for him the best that we can offer. It is our duty and privilege to feed our children, clothe them, educate them and make them better than ourselves - and in so doing, we will

find our own happiness and satisfaction. This is because we believe in progress, and we cherish the hope that every succeeding generation will move closer towards the ideal of perfection.

7 Let me now congratulate the prize-winners of this Baby Show. Everyone of them is a bundle of joy, and I am sure the proud parents will continue to give them the care and support they will need to become socially useful citizens in their later life.

Thank you.

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