



SPEECH BY MR JEK YEUN THONG, MINISTER FOR CULTURE, AT THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG SINGAPOREAN AWARD SCHEME 1975 FINAL AWARD CEREMONY ON SATURDAY 19 JUL 75 AT 7.30 PM AT THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL

The Outstanding Young Singaporean Award is an annual award sponsored by the Singapore Jaycees as a mark of recognition for the outstanding achievements of youth. The award pre-supposes that the contribution of youth is of such unquestionable value that it requires the incentive of public appreciation to spur young people to greater efforts.

I am not suggesting that the sole motivation for community work is public recognition. Indeed, anyone who is solely motivated by material rewards for public service cannot be truly dedicated. Altruistic dedication or regard for others and self-interest are incompatible with each other. I am confident that the young men and women who are the recipients of awards today were motivated by pure altruism.

This is an appropriate occasion to enlarge upon the qualities expected of the outstanding Singaporean. The outstanding Singaporean must, in his life style, represent the type of person that Singapore wants every citizen to aspire to be. The outstanding Singaporean must be able to combine an active dedication to community service with impressive career achievements. Career

achievements, however impressive, cannot by itself be the mark of the outstanding Singaporean. We do not hope to build a nation of efficient automations. We want a people who are inspired by high ideals and are able to transform them into reality.

Of course, we cannot expect such high standards to be achieved by every person in society. Nevertheless, by looking for qualities of unselfish dedication in community work in the Outstanding Young Singaporean, we are affirming that, difficult though it may be, dedicated community service should be one of the marks of the outstanding Singaporean and a desirable ideal. The rejection of such an ideal would be a sad thing for Singapore. It will turn Singapore into an asphalt jungle of carnivores preying on each other. We do not just want Singapore to be an efficient economic machine. We also want it to be a nation of people capable of compassion, generosity and concern for fellow **beings**. We in Singapore cannot truly speak of progress if, in our personal lives, we take a retrograde step towards purely selfish concerns.

Community service brings with it its own rewards. It gives to the dedicated individual a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfillment. His awareness of himself will increase as he exposes himself to greater demands to meet the challenge involved in community work. The

alienation of a person from the community is one of the ills of the industrial and post-industrial society. Alienation and its attendant ills can be suffered as much by the social dropout as by affluent professionals and businessmen who are immersed in their careers to the exclusion of everything else. The increasing number of people needing psycho-analysis in the United States and other advanced societies is a symptom of the predicament facing alienated individuals. They are not only alienated from society but also from themselves because the pursuit of success had given them no time for knowing themselves. I am not saying that success is no good. Success is essential to our survival. However, there must also be concern for the welfare of the community.

There are various forms of community work. One important aspect is the rehabilitation of our youths. This is important because young people constitute our major and most important resource. To reach out to the dropouts and the drug-addicts of Singapore is difficult and often requires a more than ordinary ability to communicate with such people. However, with dedication much can be achieved. It is my sincere hope that more young community workers will turn their attention to the rehabilitation of delinquent youth.

I extend my congratulations to the winners and runners-up of the award. I hope that they will proceed to greater endeavours. I would also like to thank the Singapore Jaycees for sponsoring this award as a recognition of the contributions of outstanding young Singaporeans.

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