

SPEECH BY MR E W BARKER, MINISTER FOR LAW AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF SPOREX 75 AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM ON 31 AUGUST 1975 AT 6.00 P.M.

During the past few years, Singapore has gone in for sports in a big way. The existence of this National Stadium is a concrete testimony of this fact.

Sportsmen play to win; when the glory comes naturally and without undue strain, as it did for us in the last SEAP Games well and good. But we should be able to rejoice in other, humbler, more everyday directions too. School children playing healthy games in the fresh air, housewives at yoga class, middle-aged city men jogging in the evening sun, young men and women workers relaxing at day's end with badminton, tennis, netball, football all this is so much reason to be glad that sports is becoming a valued way of life with us.

For there is no gainsaying it - sports does fulfil a valuable therapeutic function in modern living today. Minds and bodies tired out by work in offices, homes or factories need some "rejuvenation" or "re-activation" if they are to stay "on the go" and continue functioning effectively and in peak condition. Even five minutes of regular exercise a day can make all the difference to how a person approaches his life and work. That, for example, is what NFE (National Fitness Exercises) is all about.

In a country with sprawling land resources, exercise in the great outdoors is no problem. For every man and woman slaving away in the concrete jungle, the countryside is a saving hope. A picnic on the mountainside, a swim in a river, a walk across a green meadow or a field of flowers and nature brings swift healing to the mind and spirit and new energy for the so-called "rat-race" of life.

In Singapore, however, many are unable, in their daily lives, to take advantage of open-air recreational facilities. Large numbers of our people live in high rise apartments, and some do not have the time or inclination to travel daily to the parks that have been provided and prefer to depend on indoor exercises to achieve both physical fitness and mental relaxation.

The use of various kinds of sports equipment can prove a valuable supplement and aid in this case and in others. Of course, it could be negative to rely exclusively on machines for our exercise needs. A factory worker who presses buttons all day and comes home to press some more buttons to find his recreation will clearly miss out on a vital psychological domain - what he needs perhaps is the therapy of non-structured activity out in the fresh air.

But sports equipment is available today in a very wide and varied range. We can make an intelligent choice, in relation to our own needs, assessing carefully what equipment would be useful and how best to use it.

I am indeed happy therefore to declare open today SFOREX 75 - Singapore's first international sports equipment exhibition. A sports equipment exhibition like this is truly an opportunity to see what is available and pick the best according to our needs.

Our hope, as "sporting" Singaporeans, must be "sound minds in sound bodies". This is ultimately an unbeatable combination for working and living successfully. A nation, sound in mind and body, need stop at nothing short of total achievement of all its objectives; and sports can lead the way!
