

SPEECH BY MR E W BARKER, MINISTER FOR LAW AND THE ENVIRONMENT, AT THE OPENING OF THE CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE ON SATURDAY, 26TH JUNE '76 AT 4.30 P.M.

I am honoured and happy to be here today for this auspicious occasion. The principal, the staff and all who have helped to build and set the college on its feet can feel justifiably proud of their achievement.

Mission school education in Singapore has always been characterised by lofty principles, high ideals and an emphasis on (as I noted in the CJC Inaugural Commemorative Issue), "the concept of the unique, irreplaceable value of every human person", the key to all true moral education.

This is indeed a concept of prime importance for all educators to bear in mind. Education should never be a process in which an individual finds his self-confidence shattered merely because he cannot, given his best efforts, reach some pre-conceived, pre-supposed level of scholastic excellence. Rather, as is obvious, it should always seek to find and nurture the best in every student, inspiring him to contribute confidently and fully in the area of his own particular abilities.

However, it seems customary, normal and usual today to use the word "drop-out" freely and unnecessarily when referring to students who do not complete some scheduled course of study. By using the term "drop-out" in this negative way, we are by definition underscoring and confirming the sense of inferiority that such students may already have developed. This is brutal, to say the least. And then, to add insult to injury, we call on the alleged drop-out to use his hands and turn to "blue collar" work in the name of the fact that all work is equal and worthy of respect, whether "white collar" or "blue collar"! If we continue to drum the word "drop-out" into the ears of our youth, we might create a "psychosis of fear" of manual work that would be most unhealthy from the point of view of our industrial future.

We must have places in our society for all our young people. What is important is that they be helped by their educators to a true knowledge and appreciation of themselves and guided to a right choice of vocation. No young person need hang his head in shame and feel useless for not having made it all the way up to the top of the school. Certainly,

no young person deserves to be labelled a "drop-out".

In this context, may I draw attention to the practice in recent years of naming Higher School Certificate classes as Pre-U I and Pre-U II. This might again lead to a drop-out complex of sorts among HSC students who for one reason or another do not go on to the university. Higher School Certificate education in our junior colleges can exist for its own sake, as a further stage of secondary education and not necessarily as a mere preparation for university studies.

It is now my pleasure to declare open the Catholic Junior College. I wish the staff and students every success as you face the future armed with your fine motto: "Veritate Et Caritate" or "In Truth and Love".

DATED: JUNE 26, 1976.

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