

SPEECH BY MR LIM KIM SAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE 74TH
ANNUAL DINNER & DANCE OF THE YMCA AT THE ISLAND
BALLROOM, SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, ON 17TH JULY '76
AT 8.00 P.M.

The YMCA building at Orchard Road holds fond and happy memories for me. It was there and on the playing field in front and the former swimming pool up in Fort Canning that I learned to play billiards, tennis, table-tennis and to swim.

There was then little emphasis on extra curricular activities and few opportunities in the schools to participate in them. Many of us are grateful to the YMCA for helping us to broaden our interest in things other than scholastic and in the process help us make many life-long friends and lay for us a strong foundation for good health. I am therefore very happy tonight that you have invited my wife and I to join you in celebrating your 74th annual dinner and dance.

Many institutions in Singapore were founded to look after sectarian interest. Many of them have disappeared. Some have outlived their usefulness and exist only in name. The YMCA here is 74 years old and is still going strong if not stronger. This is because it caters not for the needs of any particular group but looks after the needs of the whole community regardless of race, creed or age.

Daily on my way to and from the city, I pass both the Tanglin branch of the Metropolitan YMCA and the YMCA building at Orchard Road. I have been thinking that some time someone in your committee must come to the conclusion that merger is mutually beneficial. I am glad that the merger is now taking place. It means a consolidation of your efforts and a broadening

of your base. Merger should enable you to provide more facilities to serve the community better. It will attract more people to join your organisation and this will bring in new blood.

I understood also that you have decided to allow women to join as full members. It is not so much a victory for the Women's Lib but for common sense. This decision of yours to embrace the fairer sex leads me to speculate whether time will bring about a marriage of convenience between the YMCA and the YWCA.

Women have breached many portals. I am not so sure now which is the shyer sex. If the man will make no move perhaps the fairer sex will take the opportunity at the next leap year to make the proposal which traditionally cannot be rejected.

You have taken the first step and opening your doors to the fairer sex is a welcome development. Female participation will set the pace for family participation and open new scope for the YMCA. We need more organisations which will cater for family participation. It is my hope that your organisation will pursue its development in this direction for this will help tighten the family unit.

Our rapid pace of industrialisation has drawn many women from the home to work in offices and factories, leaving the children behind in the hands of relatives, servants, or even to their own devices. This situation has perhaps fostered the feeling of crowded loneliness among the young. The better adjusted have no difficulties channelling their energies to sports, music and some other hobbies. It is those who have failed to adjust to modern living that we are worried about.

Bored and lonely, they look for a source of identification, are easily manipulated and susceptible to undesirable influences which manifest themselves in many forms. Drug taking, gangsterism, and robbery are but some of them.

It is ironical and regrettable that while some of the bad habits such as drug taking and hippism are ebbing in the West where they originate, these bad habits are on the rise here. Stability is slowly but surely returning in the western industrialised countries. With their large population they also have a large hard core of stable citizens with sound concepts of modern standards and traditional values. The aberration brought about by the lunatic fringe is slowly and steadily giving way to the stability and sanity found in the large core of citizens with lasting and enduring traditional values and moral standards. Of course, there still remains a small percentage of young people who appear to have cultivated a new "interest" in cults such as the Moony Movement. This I think is also likely to wane and the search for spiritual peace and comfort will soon return to the fold of the old established religions.

Singapore however is too small a country with too small a population to allow the existence of a lunatic fringe. We do not as yet have the ballast; and we do not have a sufficiently large core of citizens possessing a common tradition. We also do not have as yet the stability to allow the chance for a lunatic fringe to endanger our existence. For these reasons, we have to make every effort to stamp out habits such as drug abuse and hippism.

Recognising this, I can only welcome the YMCA's efforts to reach out to potential members through your proposed mobile programme. I understand you intend to organise activities in population centres to interest would be members.

Instead of waiting for potential members to come to you, I am glad you are bringing the YMCA and what it stands for to the thousands of young people waiting to be interested. The success of your programme would mean that there is less likelihood for them to succumb to undesirable influences and for the unscrupulous to make use of them. It is my hope that more service organisations will adopt this approach and complement the Government's efforts in building up a healthy and promising new generation.

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