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TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LAW AND
THE ENVIRONMENT, MR E W BARKER, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION SEMINAR, ON FRIDAY,
29 JULY 1977 AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM

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First, a very good morning to you. It's so nice to see so many of you here. I was frightened by the number of cars outside.

May I start off by quoting from the classical Greeks. It was in their age that the idea of balance in life was first extolled. By 'balance' they meant the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of men through which the unity of the soul was to be achieved.

This philosophic ideal is recorded in the writings of Pythagoras and Plato and its most perfect exemplification is perhaps found in the Athens of the fifth century BC when men of genius sprang up in many fields of endeavour.

Today we think and talk of education of the whole man and the need for a coherent view of life. This reaffirms the belief in the Greek ideal of balance.

For the adult, a balance between work and recreation and for youth, a balance between study and work or study and play. And this government expects you, our citizens, to work hard. We have no alternative. It has been said before, we have no natural resources, no oil, no uranium; only water. We hope to build a rugged society. But we don't expect you to be rugged seven days a week. Hence, our efforts at building places for recreation, beaches and parks. It is a pity that we've lost Changi beach to the second airport. But what to do! Hence, our efforts at building more beaches on the islands and the preservation of one-third of the East Coast Parkway for recreation.

We actively /2.

We actively encourage mass participation in sport. And it is encouraging to see so many of our people, even the old jogging in the mornings and the evenings.

As for youth, there is much truth in the saying that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Hence, the emphasis on extracurricular activities in our schools to inculcate all that is good for the wholesome development of our young.

I understand that most of you here this morning are charged with this responsibility.

In 1973, it is interesting to note that 39 school athletes represented Singapore at the Seventh SEAP Games held here. These school children helped us to win 18 golds, 12 silver and 7 bronze medals. This high standard of performance was again repeated in the 1975 SEAP Games. Almost 80% of our coaches in national associations are teachers. You must keep up the good work. There are no medals or monetary rewards to be won in your area of work, but there is fulfilment in the knowledge that today's and tomorrow's societies will be better ones as a result of your efforts. Perhaps, we should give more medals, I don't know.

But we have a sportsman and sportswoman award, meritorious awards, which come from my organisation - the Singapore National Olympic Council. Perhaps the Singapore Sports Council should consider making an award for the best sports boy or the best sports girl. I think the name itself will encourage our children to do better in sports. This is a suggestion. Perhaps, we can go even further and make an award for the best school for sports in Singapore, a yearly award. These are suggestions which you might consider and argue in your coming seminar. But whatever you do don't be afraid to speak freely.

In Parliament, I've had to tell our MPs to speak without any inhibition. Surely, you should have none. I am not expecting any cut and thrust in debate in your seminar. But if you have an idea, put it across, there's everything to be gained, nothing to lose. And if I have said anything out

of place this morning, please criticise.

Can I deal with just two points before I close. One is that today there is concern over school children being coerced to participate both for the school and the club or for either one or the other. I leave the pros and cons to be discussed by you in your workshop meetings, but feel personally that we should avoid duplication in training and competition. Perhaps clubs and associations should concentrate more on school-leavers.

There is also a growing concern over fair play or should I say 'dirty play' in sports. Fair play is demonstrated, in particular, by the competitor. It requires as a minimum that he shows strict unfailing observance of the written rule. This will be easier if he appreciates the purpose of the rule and if he recognises that beyond the written rule there is a right and proper spirit in which to engage in competitive sport. Fair play is exemplified by unquestioning acceptance of the referee's decision. Playing to win is an essential first objective, but refusing resolutely to seek victory by any means. How many times have you seen a footballer, on television if you like, when he is pulled down by a fullback rolls over and groans. The moment the referee doesn't take notice he is up and running another hundred yards. Too much of that, you know. Finally the referee gets fed up and when he is really pulled down he doesn't blow the whistle because this chap made it a habit.

Finally, may I say that fair play is embodied in modesty in victory; graciousness in defeat; and in that generosity of outlook which creates warm and lasting human relationships. But fair play is not the prerogative of the competitor. Coaches, officials, referees, spectators including those here and all those who are involved in competitive sport have necessary and special contributions to make through the influence which they can bring on the competitor.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have great pleasure in declaring this Physical Education Seminar open. I wish you well in your deliberations. Thank you.