

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

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SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, MR. TANG SEE CHIM, AT THE
OPENING OF A VARIETY CONCERT OF THE SINGAPORE
RED CROSS SOCIETY HELD AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE
ON 6TH MAY, 1970 AT 8.00 P.M.

I am privileged tonight to be invited by the Singapore Red Cross Society to join in its celebrations of World Red Cross Day.

It is a well-known fact that we in Singapore enjoy one of the highest standards of living in Asia. It is also known that although we have social problems in our society, they are less serious and less insurmountable than those faced by some of our fellow Asian neighbours where their physical size and underdeveloped means of public transportation constitute a severe handicap in their efforts to solve their social problems. We are, therefore, very fortunate in this aspect. It is true that solutions to social problems and adversities are more easily managed in a compact island-nation such as ours. However, I believe Singapore's success in meeting her social problems is not due to her physical size alone. Credit must be given to the sustained efforts of our voluntary organisations and more importantly to the people behind these organisations. Our well-sustained efforts to meet social needs and social problems are closely linked to the cultural heritage of our people - their new outlook and their consciousness of service and social responsibility. Those people are imbued by the desire and the drive to contribute their share towards building not only a prosperous Singapore but also one with a social environment, healthy to live and work in - a society which we all can be truly proud.

The contributions towards this satisfactory state of social health in Singapore did not come about overnight. Our social service and welfare organisations and the people behind them worked untiringly for the social services we have in Singapore to-day.

As you might know, organisation and development of systematic welfare services to cover the wider public began in Singapore only after the 2nd World War when our island, which was then under the

British, was left with many problems of social dislocation, poverty and other forms of social distress. The Government Social Welfare Department was established to look after the relief and dislocation problems. On the other hand, voluntary efforts sprang up quickly to support Government services, so that working together, the many social problems can be alleviated.

Since then, it is widely recognised that voluntary organisations have continued to carry a large share of providing social services to meet the needs of our rapidly developing and modernising society. Many of the voluntary organisations exist to meet a single or more specialised social need, such as helping handicapped persons. There are others which supplement Government social services; and there is yet a third type - the larger voluntary organisations, like the Red Cross, which supplement Government social services as well as meet new social needs as these arise in the community. The flexibility and readiness of the Red Cross Society to come quickly to meet a new need is in line with your aims and objectives of giving aid to the sick and wounded in time of war, and, in time of peace, towards the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering. Your Society's constant evaluation of social needs and promptness to meet them are the fine traits you have often shown, for example, your Night Emergency Ambulance Service, the Blood Donation Campaign and, more recently, your decision to establish a Clinic in the Delta area to meet the needs of the residents there. It is in these effective ways that your Society stands as one of the leading voluntary organisations in Singapore.

I understand that the Singapore Red Cross Society is organising a number of activities to commemorate World Red Cross Day. The Variety Show which you have organised to-night is just one of them and I think a very suitable form of celebrating this auspicious day for Red Cross societies all over the world. It also provides a suitable means of mental relaxation to your band of dedicated workers and helpers who are daily facing, meeting and coping with a multitude of distressing human problems brought by the thousands of people whom your Society helps during the year. I am therefore very happy to declare this Variety Show open and to wish you all an enjoyable and pleasant evening.

DATE: 6TH MAY, 1970