

SPEECH BY MR. L.P. RODRIGO, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
FOUNDER'S DAY OF ST. JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION ON 15TH
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I wish to thank you for the opportunity of talking to the staff and students of St. Joseph's Institution at this Founder's Day Ceremony.

It is the kind of opportunity which I would not easily allow to slip past me as I belong to that category of people who are extremely conscious of the potential of our massive young and who are anxious to ensure their commitment to the security, prosperity and peace of our nation.

Addressing myself to this fine body of youth gathered here, I say that your general reading should inform you that a considerable following of youth in the society of a developed country has constructed a philosophy of non-commitment and their practice of this philosophy has alienated them from the social and cultural traditions and modes of living of their society. To use the term "philosophy" in reference to the chosen beliefs of these youth is being generous. This philosophy was not constructed in the manner that our classical and neo-classical philosophers constructed their philosophies. Quite unlike Socrates who constructed his "View of the Good-life" by ceaseless painstaking questioning of members of the Greek society, the alienated youth in reference formulated their view of life in the course of demonstrations for fundamental liberties and pop fairs.

These alienated youth once even had their philosopher in the person of Timothy Leary, a Harvard University drop-out who produced a 4-volume work being a historical account of the league for Spiritual Discovery which he led. The work entitled "High Priest" was regarded as the bible of the cult. The first sentence in Volume I begins as follows: "In the beginning was the Turn-On".

In the society of the developed countries where this has happened the large majority of the populace regard this fact of social evolution as bordering on the ridiculous though dangerous and have not encouraged it. This philosophy of alienated youth advocates non-commitment in the drama of life, narcotic decay and uninhibited sexuality on the pretext of an idealistic commitment to the preservation of fundamental liberties. It is idealism thoroughly abused.

In our society today there is becoming apparent the need of our youth to find an object of their own idealism.

Two decades ago, the political and social situation and climate

offered a most worthy object to the idealism of the youth in that generation. The pride and conscience of youth were stirred by their subjugation to foreign masters. Independence was the common political aspiration of the people. The idealism of youth committed youth to the Independence Cause which has taken our people through dramatic political and social changes and experiences. That era which has receded into history provided youth with challenge and excitement. In the course of twenty years a new generation of youth has emerged who now seek a worthy object of their own idealism.

It is a question of recognition. This era today is no less auspicious than the era of the Independence Movement. For us it is very much an era of Construction. Ahead of youth today are the challenges of political, economic, social and cultural Construction. The times offer as much excitement and drama as the era of political agitation and search for independence. In point of fact, the effort for today's cause should provide more personal satisfaction as it is positive in nature whereas the agitation for independence was negative in that it involved all organised effort to frustrate and dislodge colonial rule.

Today's youth want to recognise the quintessence and meaning of current political, economic, social and cultural activity and grasp the trend of our social evolution if their own idealism is to find attachment to a worthy cause and commit youth to a constructive role in our society. There is much need for the vigorous idealism of youth in the national effort to construct our economy upon lasting foundations; in the national effort to construct a new city and with it, new attitudes for purposeful living in an increasingly urban environment; in the national effort to construct a common appreciation of our cultures to evolve a national identity; in the national effort to construct our own ability to protect all that we have constructed.

Our society today is in a ferment of change and youth predominate. Youth is most worthily committed when its idealism find abiding attachment to the cause of National Construction. An undesirable development would be the personal commitment of our own citizens to their personal interest and nothing more. For it is quite plain that our survival and success lie in our collective effort for the National Cause. A tragic social development would of course be our youth opting out of personal and national commitment altogether for euphoria and dissipation. Though the event is unlikely as the majority of our youth retain in them that reliable genius called common sense, youth itself should not be unmoved by such a social development for it may be a continuing source of ill-persuasion to the generation of rising adolescents. Youth should discourage its own members from wasting their idealism and potential and instead undertake Constructive Commitment.

The success of today's nation builders must secure the commitment of today's youth for tomorrow's success in nation building.