

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC:JUL/55/72(HEALTH)

7/12

SPEECH BY MR. CHUA SIAN CHIN, MINISTER FOR HEALTH
AND M.P. FOR MACPHERSON, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY
OF THE FAMILY PLANNING CAMPAIGN 1972 IN THE
MACPHERSON CONSTITUENCY ON SATURDAY, 29 JULY 1972
AT 2000 HOURS AT THE MACPHERSON COMMUNITY CENTRE

ACC. No.	NARC
72 0024	7A3

Last week our Family Planning Campaign was officially launched on the national level at the Conference Hall. The campaign is now being conducted on the ground level in the various constituencies throughout our Republic.

This is indeed the first time that a family planning campaign has been organised and launched on such a massive scale involving community leaders in the Citizens' Consultative Committees, Management Committees of Community Centres and MPs. Besides holding talks, exhibitions in the various community centres they are in the course of the campaign making house to house visits to put across the message that a small family means a more healthy, prosperous and happy family and a better future for the children.

I have no doubts that this kind of face to face motivation and particularly by community leaders who are people with influence, will have the desired effect of getting the message across to all sections of our people. The message should reach groups which could not be reached before or which are still resistant to accepting family planning. In any case their work would be extremely invaluable in paving the way for our teams of professional motivators from the Family Planning Board to follow up upon.

It is these groups who have far too many children already and whose income levels are insufficient to properly feed and upbringing them that need to practise family planning very badly. They are therefore our priority target groups in this campaign. They are to be found mainly among our one-room flat dwellers in our Housing Estates and among those who reside in the squatter settlements

and kampong areas. You will find that most of our one-room flat dwellers have a large number of children while the majority of those who stay in 3-room flats have only a small number of children. The reason for this phenomenon is quite obvious. Those with smaller families had not dissipated their income in bringing forth and feeding too many children and thus could afford a 3-room flat.

These low income groups who are still continuing to produce more children are not only hindering our efforts at reducing birth rates but they pose a serious social problem for the present as well as the future. The tragedy is that by their having too many children not only the standards of living of their family will forever remain at the subsistence level but they leave their children with very little chances in life.

A study of the incidence of Anaemia cases among children revealed that 25% of the cases came from families with 3 or less children and 75% of cases came from families with more than 3 children. This clearly shows that the majority of the parents with 3 or more children could not afford to provide their children with proper nourishing food.

Children if not given food with adequate proteins, iron and vitamins during their formative years could seriously retard their brain development. This is clearly shown in a study of Primary 6 examination results among a group of 1,123 children. This study shows that among children who are well-nourished 77% of them passed and only 23% failed. Those who are averagely nourished 51.4% passed and 48.6% failed. But among those who are under-nourished only 23.9% passed and 76.1% failed.

Thus the majority of the children from parents who have far too many than they can afford to adequately feed will have little opportunity to rise out of the present low level of economic and

social existence where their parents belong.

We can expect Singapore to continue to progress economically achieving higher rates of economic growth. However, these groups will continue to remain economically depressed if they continue to have more children. You may up their wages by giving them a 13th month or even a 14th or 15th month payment, this would be of no avail if they continue to increase their commitments by bringing forth more children to feed and clothe. Any rise in wages will be nullified by having more children.

There is therefore the danger in the future that after Singapore become affluent we shall continue to have the problem of poverty amongst these groups. We shall have what is called the problem of poverty amidst affluence.

It is therefore of national importance that all our efforts be concentrated at getting these groups to adopt family planning and stop producing any more children.

I have now much pleasure to declare open the Family Planning Campaign in the MacPherson Constituency and would like to thank the participants and organisers of this campaign.