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SPEECH BY MR CHAI CHONG YII, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR
EDUCATION, AT THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF HOI THIN AMATEUR
DRAMATIC ASSOCIATION AT NEPTUNE THEATRE RESTAURANT
ON WEDNESDAY, 27 DECEMBER 1978 AT 8.00 P.M.

I feel very honoured indeed to be invited to this auspicious occasion of the 60th Anniversary of your Association. Sixty years is, especially for an association devoted to the social, cultural and leisure pursuits of the people, a long history and certainly worthy of celebration. In celebrating the occasion, the enthusiasm and excitement which must have prevailed over the initial years can be recaptured and rekindled. The fact that your celebration this evening is in aid of the Building Extension Fund of the community centre in your constituency adds even more meaning and significance to the occasion. Your fine effort deserves every commendation and should serve as an example for other associations and clubs.

Singapore, as we all know, is a small island republic of slightly over 600 square kilometres. We are naturally proud of our achievement despite our slim natural resources. However, this achievement did not come easily but is the result of the co-operation between government and the people. Such an achievement is due entirely to the hard work and dedication of the people under the able leadership of our political and community leaders, all working within a well-knit social framework.

When we look back over our past, we cannot help but feel a sense of pride. But we must not slacken our efforts. We should never forget the teaching of our predecessors that "to lose something is easy, but to recover it is difficult". The quality of our lives today is sustained by an invisible "power house" which is the source of all human energy. And the fuel of this giant generator

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is the will and physical strength of each and every individual. Should we one day relax our effort and become lazy, the achievement of our nation will diminish, and our future may be plunged into darkness.

We have in Singapore today a tightly organised and highly efficient social structure. At the top, we have just and righteous leaders. In the middle band, we have thousands of charity associations and trade and industrial organisations. At the broad base of this hierarchy are the two and a quarter million people, each performing his or her respective duties, forming the whole social fabric. What is more, a strong sense of common purpose at all levels creates in our society an adaptability and responsiveness to change which is so vital to our survival. At the heart of this resilience is an innate sense of trust, a trust which exists between the government and the governed, the employer and employee, the leaders and the led.

This sense of trust that holds our nation together cannot, however, be taken for granted. Those in leadership positions must always think in terms of the welfare of the collective whole and through their actions and example, inspire in the people a spirit of sacrificing mere personal good to the common good of the whole nation. Only then will the trust that unifies our people continue to strengthen the social bond and steer our nation towards greater achievement.

This charity dinner organised by your Association is an excellent example of working towards the common good of the people and the nation. I am sure that in the coming years, your members will have even greater confidence and faith in the leadership of the Association and participate even more enthusiastically in its programmes and projects. Finally, let me wish each and every one good health and success in all your endeavours.