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SPEECH BY THE SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, MR CHAI CHONG YII, AT THE 10TH COLLEGE DAY CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE ON SUNDAY, MAY 13, 1979, AT 5.30 P.M.

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National Junior College is now 10 years old. Although a period of 10 years is considered short in education, it is nevertheless the oldest junior college in our Republic. We have at present seven junior colleges. Two of them are government colleges and the rest are government-aided. These seven junior colleges together with our pre-u centres in the secondary schools provide the post-secondary education for the brightest 20 per cent of our student population. National Junior College being now well-established has a leading role to play in ensuring that the cream of our human resources is given the best possible education. It is not just in the personal interests of the students that the college must educate them to their fullest potential. It is also in the interests of our nation as a whole to ensure that our brain powers are not wasted. In respect of academic pursuits, our junior colleges have been quite successful as proved by their good examination results. Unlike academic performance which can be assessed quite easily in a matter of a few years, the other objective of building expensive junior colleges is to produce better national and social leaders. This long-term objective whether it has been achieved is yet to be proved.

Human beings are selfish by nature. The fact that a person is cleverer and is given better education by the state will not necessarily make him less selfish and think more of the well-being of his fellow countrymen. However, it will be a different story altogether if he can be convinced that his personal interests are tied up with the interests of the society. No one can live by himself in a modern society. His every need in life is supplied by the society. He cannot retain his wealth or his reputation without the society which nurtures him, yet the society can live on happily without him. No one is too important as to be indispensable. Let me take a junior college student as an example. He is among the brightest 20 per cent and therefore may be labelled as a potential leader who is likely to end up leading a department, a company or even a big corporation, say 20 years from now. But he must start learning to be one as from school days2/-

school days. To play the role of a leader, he must have followers. To keep them with him, he must care for them and share with them what he has achieved.

As the saying goes: "If there are no soldiers, there can be no general." A leader has the obligation of looking after the benefit of his followers. If he is too selfish as to deprive his supporters what they deserve, he will soon discover that all the better ones have left him. When that happens, he is not a leader any more but just a boss. Nothing can then be effected without using threat and punishment. The end result will be a failure. You all are prospective leaders. It is therefore very important for you to learn to suppress your selfish instinct and help your fellow students as much as you can. You help your classmates, so will they help you. You work for the less intelligent, so will they support you.

We live in a democratic modern society. We often hear of people, including students, talking of what their fundamental rights are. The right to live in peace, the right to be educated, the right to speak, are some of them. Very seldom do we hear of people talking of what their obligations are. The difference in approach towards rights and obligations shows our selfish nature. If there are only claims of rights without corresponding offers to discharge obligations, it is obvious that the claims cannot be met. You take from society what you need, so must you give to society what others need. If the brightest students think only of themselves and do their utmost to get as much as they can possibly lay their hands on, there will be very little left for the masses whose joint efforts determine the success or failure of a nation. We must avoid having to face such a scenario.

You all know that you belong to the top few per cent of our student population. It is your sacred duty to see that you contribute more if you wish to claim more enjoyment. The society provides you with the best education it can afford. It expects you to reciprocate. You work for your future, so must you work for the welfare of the nation. The two are interwoven. Those of you who are abler must contribute more. As your rewards will be proportionately more, you will be enjoying the fruits of your own labour. The more you put in, the more you will have.

Finally, I wish you all every success in your endeavour.
