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SPEECH BY MR CHIN HARN TONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND MP FOR ALJUNIED AT THE
ALJUNIED CONSTITUENCY NATIONAL DAY DINNER AT
BALAM ROAD CAR PARK ON FRIDAY, 4 AUGUST '78 AT 8.00 PM

This Dinner is one of the functions held in our Aljunied Constituency to celebrate the 13th Anniversary of our Republic of Singapore. This Anniversary marks our entering into the 14th year of nationhood. Every National Day should be an occasion for national pride and national awareness. It is an opportune occasion to reflect on the progress of nation-building during the past year. The outward manifestations of National Day in Singapore are apparent for all to see - public roads are gaily decorated; parades are held. The people in all the constituencies are celebrating National Day in their respective manner.

But if these celebrations are to be more than being merely occasions for dinners and social niceties, we must realise the deeper meaning of celebrating National Day. It means -

- (1) We as a Republic have further consolidated our Nationhood;
- (2) We as loyal citizens of our Republic must further pledge our resolve for continuing progress; and
- (3) We as individuals, to achieve national awareness and to further community welfare at a National level, may have to make personal "sacrifices" from time to time.

What do I mean by personal "sacrifices"? Take National Service for example. Young men, naturally enough, if given the choice, would shun the strict discipline and rigours of army life. But after completing their period of national service, they can take pride in having performed something positive in the service of the country, while in the process they have also been toughened mentally and physically.

The needs of any sovereign Republic may vary from time to time. It is the task of the Government accurately to identify these needs and effectively to implement plans of action to satisfy these needs. Such policies may only affect different groups at different times. Yet, not all target groups are, when called upon, prepared to respond to the national call. I can quote you a current example to illustrate my point. You must have all read and heard of the issue of the bonding of medical students. The bond has been introduced as a fair way of ensuring that these medical students, after graduation, repay to Society the cost of their expensive training. Whatever tuition fees they or their parents may have paid do not amount to more than a fraction of the actual cost borne by Society. Yet as soon as they have qualified, they think in terms of enriching themselves rather than serving Society. This trend has been noticed in quite a number of medical graduates in recent years, and it is high time the Government did alter such pattern of a social conduct for the National good. The need for more doctors to man the Government medical services has been identified. Medical students are now asked to respond to this call by signing the bond. The bonding is no more than national service - call it national medical service if you like. Loyal citizens should be only too happy to perform this service.

The Singapore working population structure is like a pyramid, with a very wide base of young people. This means that every year, increasingly more young people come into the labour market. The expectations of these people are different from their elders ten or twenty years ago. Such higher expectations are only justified if the national economy can sustain the higher standard of living. An increase in the standard of living is possible only if we produce and sell more to pay for our greater needs. Economically Singapore registered a 7.8% increase in its G.N.P. last year. While this is a creditable effort, to sustain such a growth rate would depend on good government planning, the co-operation of industries and the productivity of the total workforce in Singapore. Young people, therefore, have a role to play to help sustain the national economy. They should not be choosy about jobs but rather to take whatever jobs that come along, whether blue-collar or not. Among the young there is a tendency to shun hard work and seek office jobs. People who work in factories and shipyard, for example, are certainly making a positive contribution to the national economy.

My message to you for National Day is simply that we should be thankful for having completed another year of satisfactory progress, and for what we have today. If we want more, we should also be prepared to contribute more and to work harder. With this message in mind, let us enjoy our Dinner and celebrate with joy our having achieved another year of progress.

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