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SPEECH BY MR CHIN HARN TONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE  
MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE NATIONAL SERVICEMEN SEND-  
OFF PARTY AT THE ALJUNIED COMMUNITY CENTRE ON WEDNESDAY,  
17 JANUARY 1979 AT 9.00 AM

Any country, big or small, with any claim to be an independent, sovereign nation, must have the means to defend its independence. To do this, the country must have a defence force, which means there must be persons willing and able to bear arms in defence of the country. Naturally, since Singapore citizens enjoy the privileges and benefits of Singapore citizenship, they have the responsibility of maintaining the defence of Singapore.

National service has become an obligation of Singapore citizenship, a responsibility which cannot be shirked by anyone whether rich or poor, or whether with influential backgrounds or otherwise or whether highly educated or otherwise. All of you who are being called up today should, therefore, feel proud that you are responding to the call of the nation. The duty you are about to perform is a duty directly in the service of our Republic.

While in national service, you will be given many opportunities to gain new experiences and new skills, which you would not otherwise have gained in ordinary civilian life. For young men who are at a threshold of manhood, national service serves as a period in which you can learn and be prepared to meet the vigours of adult working life. Moreover, by being thrown together to share a common life for a few years, young men will be able to mix with others of different social educational and cultural backgrounds.

It has been ..... /2

It has been observed, for instance, that apart from being "physically and mentally toughened up" during national service, many young men have also acquired a feeling of self-assurance and self-confidence, which they may not otherwise have possessed. Thus many young men from the non-English stream who, before national service, hardly dare to speak any English in public, have learnt during their national service to speak English with confidence.

The initial period of national service, of course, will be the most trying period, since it will mean for most of you, some more some less, a rather abrupt transition from your family environment to a military existence. Whatever family life-styles you have left behind, you will find the disciplined and regimental programme of the armed forces rather strange. However, all of you can cope with what is required of you. In fact, on the basis of the past observations, by the time of Run-out-date (ROD), when the compulsory period of national service is over, you will feel yourselves to be new persons and looking back, you will say that this period of national service is not so bad after all.

For you parents and friends who are gathered here today to see these young men off, I can assure you that they will be well looked after. For you young men who are being called up, I assure you if you enter this service with a positive outlook, you will find that national service can be a very enjoyable and rewarding period of your life. I wish you all the best. From the service and dedication of citizens like you, we can proudly proclaim  
Majula Singapura!

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