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SPEECH BY MR CH'NG JIT KOON, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, AT THE 94TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF
FAIRFIELD METHODIST GIRLS' SCHOOL AT AMBASSADOR HOTEL
ON WEDNESDAY, 4 AUGUST '82 AT 8.00 PM

I am indeed delighted to be invited to grace the 94th anniversary celebration of Fairfield Methodist Girls' School this evening. In 1983, the school will function from the new premises at Dover Road as a co-educational institution. This change signifies an important watershed in the long history of the school. A new phase will begin with fresh challenges for the school community. In view of this significant development, it will not be out of place for me to speak on "Traditions, change and directions for new growth" on this, your 94th, anniversary celebration.

The early years of the history of Fairfield Methodist Girls' School were illustrious years. When the school was founded by Miss Sophia Blackmore on the Methodist Mission, there were eight pupils. Despite the humble beginnings, the founding of the school saw the birth of new convictions and new traditions in the traditional Chinese community in the Telok Ayer area. The provision of a good education for girls was accepted as a worthy pursuit and an indispensable parental responsibility. Further, the pioneering parents placed their trust on the Methodist Church and the school staff to provide a proper education for their children. With the support and involvement of the community, the school expanded and grew.

For nine-and-the-half decades, the school has progressed from strength to strength to become one of the better known schools in Singapore. Apart from giving a meaningful and balanced education to the students, the school has also concerned itself with the welfare of the community. Social service to the community, accommodation given to parents, care for the welfare of

the disadvantaged, /2.

the disadvantaged, both young and old, remain a vital part of the school character. In a sense, these traditions provide the motivational base and inspiration for the school to function and mature as a progressive institution. These are precious assets.

Change in a sense reconciles traditions with new directions for growth. What is important about change is that it ensures continuity and promote refinement. Change which is positively conceived and implemented is continuous refinement. The testimony to meaningful change is clearly evident in Singapore.

Through the collective efforts of our people and the sensible approaches we adopt to problem-solving, Singaporeans have been able to overcome problems and make commendable progress in the last two decades. The heart of Singapore City is being transformed. Satellite towns have sprung up in the suburban parts of the island. Urban renewal and industrial development demand a more efficient utilization of resources, especially land in the city area. The MRT will revolutionise our transport and communication patterns. The spirit of positive change guides us in our progress as a people.

The pace of change affects us all. We are able to cope with change for a number of reasons. Firstly, we are noted, among other things, for our cultural traditions to venture and seek a better quality of life. Secondly, our leaders themselves have adopted a disciplined approach and commitment to work and sacrifice for the welfare of all. Thirdly, we are open and receptive to modern technological systems and have exploited them to our advantage. In short, we have designed our own code of work ethics within the framework and nuances of our evolving culture.

For example, the New Education System sets the sights for the decades ahead. We are concerned and committed in principle to provide and promote, a realistic curriculum, competent teachers, adequate facilities and teaching resources, and a healthy social environment. All our changes and improvements in education focus on this broad developmental framework. The new school for Fairfield is another example of change to cope with progress in our society.

The new school, Fairfield Methodist Secondary School, will start off with tested foundations you carry over. With the Government's policy to give autonomy and consequently more responsibility to schools to manage their own programmes, the school can further contribute and strive for higher levels of achievement. The new school with its modern facilities and services, will certainly give you the leeway to undertake initiatives you were unable to do so before. A new lease of life is in the offing for the school community.

The catchment area for the new school spreads from Dover Road, Kent Ridge, Wessex Estate and Ayer Rajah Road areas. The school enrolment will rise to 2400. Besides, the inclusion of boys for a school which has long catered for girls, further demands new approaches and adjustments to school management as well as the delivery of school programmes. It would be prudent to consider these changes and challenges early to facilitate the implementation of desirable school strategies with minimal disruption for the school community.

Perhaps it is also proper to review some of the school achievements. It is often said that a school is as good as the leaders and teachers who serve her. I am impressed with the long line of dedicated school leaders who have set the pace and tone for the school. Their contributions serve as models for emulation by other schools. Similarly the contributions of outstanding teachers is also a valuable part of the school history. Finally the pupils' achievement and their subsequent contributions to the school and society have become a precious school heritage.

I am confident that given your character and determination you are more than equipped to meet your future challenges with confidence.

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