

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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**SPEECH BY MR CHOR YEOK ENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, AT THE CHARTER NIGHT CEREMONY
OF THE INTERNATIONAL Y'S MEN'S CLUB OF SINGAPORE ALPHA
CHAPTER AT THE HOTEL EQUATORIAL ON SUNDAY
14 DECEMBER 1980 AT 8.00 PM**

I am happy to be here tonight to witness the Charter presentation of your Club.

The Y's Men's Club is well-known for its many social service and charity works in Singapore. The formation of your Club will enable it to increase its contribution to the community.

I am told that the majority of your members are young men and women with an average age of 30. This is very commendable. At your age it is easy to be distracted by the many other activities which modern social life provides. Instead, you have chosen to sacrifice your time and energy into helping the less fortunate of your fellow citizens. By working together as an organized group you can achieve better results.

A little while ago when the lights in this Hall were dimmed, I felt that there was a great significance in the ceremony. You are youthful people emerging from the darkness of selfishness into the light of social awareness. I wish there are more people in Singapore who can come out of their self-imposed darkness. These people, who care only for themselves, often take for granted that the enjoyment of public utilities is a matter of right. They fail to consider that they must give back something to the Community for these privileges. They fail to realise that many people have made sacrifices. They expect everytime they turn on the tap that water will flow and when they turn on the light-switch there will be light.

Many of our people are very young. Perhaps they do not know or cannot remember that twenty years ago, there were many kampongs and

villages where piped water and electricity were just dreams. Today, these areas are occupied by large Housing and Development Board flats with piped water, electricity, modern sanitation, proper roads, drains, car-parks, lifts, schools, markets, bus-shelters, libraries and even television antenna. These public amenities did not spring up overnight. In fact, there were those dedicated people who spent sleepless nights so that their fellow Citizens can enjoy them today.

In those dark days - and I mean really dark days and nights - some of us in the Government had to travel in darkness over bad roads, full of pot-holes, and sometimes even to areas where the only water available for drinking was from the rain. We had to suffer the inconveniences and difficulties because we were prepared to make the sacrifices for a better, healthier, and more comfortable, environment to work, play and live in. It was not an easy job. We not only had to fight many political battles with the Communists, racialists and anti-National elements, we had also to try to win the hearts and minds of the kampong and village people, to convince them to give up old ways of thinking and living so that their children will have a better life. Today with all the modern comforts we tend to forget all those problems and instead grumble about higher road taxes, higher interest on bank loans, insufficient car-parks, slow buses, and frequent break-down of lifts. Even our complaints of daily living have progressed! Twenty years from now no doubt there will still be complaints. I hope by then those complaints will be even more progressive and not about lack of water and electricity, and about bad roads and drains. But we cannot take for granted that there will be such progress. Unless all the loyal Citizens of Singapore work hard and plan ahead together, we will find ourselves back to the days of darkness once again.

You, who have pledged to serve the community by active social work, must always remember that concern for your less fortunate citizens is your prime responsibility. The moment you begin to lose sight of this objective and think of your own interests first, you will not be contributing to the betterment of your Community but to its decay. We have been able to achieve a better life for our Citizens because we placed the welfare of our people before that of ourselves. It is my sincere hope that you will do likewise. Only then can you and your Club contribute effectively to the improvement of social service in Singapore.

Thank you once again for inviting me. I wish you good luck and every success in all your projects.