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SPEECH BY MR HO KAH LEONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION), AT THE ANNUAL REVIEW AND PRESENTATION DAY OF
THE ST JOHN AMBULANCE BRIGADE AREA ONE AT THE PUB AUDITORIUM
ON SUNDAY, 17 JUL 83 AT 2.30 PM

The distinctive black and white uniforms of the St John Ambulance Brigade members and the white uniforms of its nurses are always visible at large public functions. The unobtrusive presence of St John members is indeed comforting to all present at these functions, for they know that should there be an emergency, be it minor or life threatening, help is at hand.

What is it that motivates these people wearing St John uniforms to undergo the rigours of training to equip themselves with the skills needed to help others? What is it that makes them give up their leisure hours and selflessly come out to provide this much appreciated service?

To answer these and other questions one has to go right back to history to the year 1066 when the white cross of St John of Jerusalem came to be recognised for its care of the wounded in war. The compassion felt for the suffering sick and wounded which led to the founding of this movement is still very much in evidence today among St John members as it was in 1066. It was this same compassion for suffering humanity that led to the development of this movement into a voluntary organisation devoted to the relief of the sick and suffering in times of peace.

What can be more noble than this - that one devotes one's time and skills to relieve pain and suffering and perhaps even to save lives? It is this, I think, that motivates St John members to give of themselves to the service of others. It was perhaps also this, that led a group of doctors way back in 1935 to form the St John movement in Singapore. How many lives were saved in World War II by St John members we do not know. But it is certainly comforting to know that the St John Ambulance Brigade stands ready to help in times of disasters, be the disasters man-made or natural.

The St John Ambulance Brigade has an important role to play in times of war as well as in time of peace. Joining the St John Ambulance Brigade can be considered a patriotic act. For in times of war, our brave men in the military forces can fight confidently knowing full well that the first aid and medical needs of the civilian population are looked after by St John and other agencies as well as by the national civil defence organisation. In times of peace, the Brigade promotes the spirit of friendship, co-operation, civic-consciousness and voluntary service through its training programmes, service to the public and other activities.

I therefore encourage all St John Members to influence their friends to join them. I understand the Brigade has a total membership in Singapore of over 8,000 consisting of students and adults in all walks of life. It is certainly not difficult to encourage more students to join the organisation. Recognising the importance of uniformed organisations in the education process in schools, my Ministry has provided encouragement to schools in a very substantial manner in the form of grants.

Area One of the St John Ambulance Brigade has 600 members in seven school divisions and two open divisions. If each St John member in Area One were to bring a friend to

join the movement, then straightaway your membership will double to 1,200. It should not be too difficult for you to persuade your friends to join as you set good examples for them. Your record of service both to National St John Headquarters in assisting to raise funds through flag days and other activities and to the public at functions such as the recent SEA Games is indeed impressive. You have deserved well the many letters of appreciation from those whom you have assisted.

I am indeed very pleased and happy to join you in your 5th anniversary celebrations. I congratulate Area One on its outstanding record of service and in particular the outstanding officers and members who are being recognised today.

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