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Archives & Oral History Department
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SPEECH BY MR LIM CHEE ONN, MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO
AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF MIUC, AT THE SINGAPORE RED Acc. No. NARC
CROSS PARADE-CUM-ENROLMENT CEREMONY AT THE TOA PAYOH 81 0131 6
SPORTS COMPLEX ON SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 1981, AT 4.30 P.M.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be present at this grand Parade-cum-Enrolment ceremony to commemorate the 128th anniversary of the founding of the International Red Cross Movement. Today the movement's role has enlarged from merely protecting and assisting those wounded in times of war to alleviating the sufferings of the old and the aged, the handicapped and the sick, and those afflicted by natural calamities. This role reflects aptly one of the basic Red Cross principles, that of humanity, and is represented by its emblem of a red cross on a white background which is now recognised as a symbol of compassion by young and old alike from all corners of the world.

The Red Cross Society in Singapore was established in 1949 and your membership now stands at over 8,500. During your society's history of 32 years, your members have earned the reputation of showing humanitarian concern and extending, ever so willingly, their assistance to all those who call on them for help. Your unflinching dedication to public duty and the high quality of your services are indeed worthy of emulation by others.

Last year you even extended your assistance beyond the confines of our island Republic to the needy in Kampuchea. It is with pride that I learnt of a volunteer medical team of one doctor and four nurses who spent three months in Thailand and the border area helping to relieve the pain and suffering of the unfortunate in refugee camps.

We are indeed proud that despite enjoying rapid economic progress Singaporeans have not turned into cold, calculating and self-centred creatures with no place in their hearts for compassion and public service. Indeed on the contrary many have donated generously during your society's public appeal for funds to help send the medical team to Kampuchea and on other occasions as well.

If our society is to remain a caring one, our children must understand the value of social responsibility. Extending a hand of assistance to the old and the sick, the deprived and needy, must be

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taught to them when they are still young and impressionable. They must learn that to show concern for someone else is a duty they should shoulder with pride and not a chore to be shirked. We must strive to develop in our youths this attitude of mind which is a reflection of the traditional virtue of care and regard for one's parents, elders and friends and extended beyond the boundaries of one's family and friends to the community at large.

The Singapore Red Cross Society is basically a youth organisation. Over 7,000 or about 85 per cent of your members are in the Youth Division. Your society is providing to our students in schools the training that will enable them to acquire this desire of showing regard for others. This will give them solid foundation on which to develop and strengthen their character. You therefore have a very important role to play for it has often been observed that youngsters brought up with a deep sense of obligation to help others grow up to be good and responsible citizens committed to serve others before self. You should therefore increase your effort to bring more youths into the Red Cross Society's fold as the capacity you have for moulding the character of our young is immense.

It is with pleasure that I view this Parade-cum-Enrolment ceremony. For the new recruits, this is only the beginning of a life-long awareness of your social obligation to protect and assist those in pain and need. For the more senior members, your responsibility does not end when you graduate from school or leave the Red Cross Youth Organisation. You must continue to convey the message of humanity and the other basic principles of the Red Cross, both by word and deed, in your home, place of work, and wherever you may be.

May I wish the Red Cross Society members every success in their noble task ahead.
