

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICITY DIVISION · MINISTRY OF CULTURE · CITY HALL SINGAPORE 6

HC/JUN/23/77 (FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

SPEECH BY MR. LEE KHOO CHOY, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION, AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCILS AND CENTRAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF THE P.A. YOUTH MOVEMENT AT THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AUDITORIUM ON SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 1977, AT 8 P.M.

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25 JUN 1977

Acc. No. NARC
77 0051 21

Youth has always been a source of strength and the spearhead of enthusiasm. Throughout the history of mankind, we have seen how this source of strength has been harnessed for constructive purpose beneficial to the growth of civilization. We have also witnessed how this spearhead of enthusiasm has been manipulated to spark-off bloody riots and revolution in the overthrow of government and to destroy the fabric of civilization. Since the beginning of history, youth, which provides the main source of energy has played an important role in shaping society. It can build or mar the development and progress of society.

The fact that you are gathered here today is an indication that you have surplus energy and would like to collectively channelise it for useful purposes. This makes you different from those who are not here, or who have not decided to join you. You are a luckier lot than the youth of a decade or two ago, for in those days, Singapore was very much underdeveloped and unsettled. Those were the days when uneducated children roamed the streets, a two-room flat was a bribed luxury, and the able-bodied young queuing for jobs outside the Employment Exchange in Havelock Road. Not only was there glaring disparity in the distribution of wealth, but of unequal opportunity for personal advancement because of different educational background. The pinned-up and frustrated energy was exploited and found its outlet in violent demonstrations, strikes and riots. Today, after many years of careful harnessing of constructive energy, our society has become more affluent. There is a seat for every child in the school of the parent's choice; housing is no more a luxury, for by 1980, 75 per cent of our population will be housed in HDB flats and jobs are hunting for man. However, an affluent society brings with2/-

brings with it also problems of a different nature. It concerns the proper handling of idle energies accumulated through less work and more pay. We see how the youth of some technologically advanced countries of the West are dissipating their energies on a mad craze for stimulative physical pleasure including the use of drugs. Even the more level-headed who do not indulge in such pervasive activities are addicted to excitement and entertainment oriented TV programmes which are time and energy consuming. All forms of entertainment financed by multi-million dollar giant enterprises are competing to consume the energies of the youth of today particularly those of more sophisticated and affluent society. As our younger minds in many homes become addicted to such past time, they have less time to cultivate their creative instinct. They have less time or even lost interest in the appreciation and study of fine arts, such as music, painting or writing.

In other words, they spend more time consuming cultural products tailored to consume their energy than in cultivating their talents to produce art, music or literature of their own. Whilst they may acquire temporary satisfaction by watching programmes, they miss the opportunity of acquiring a real sense of satisfaction which brings with it a sense of achievement through mastery of a musical instrument, to paint, to compose or to write.

Of course, it is natural for youth to crave for excitement, for entertainment and for pleasure. But, fortunate are those who have not allowed their talents to lay in waste and untapped and who still find time to satisfy their creative instinct despite all the temptations of exhorting attractions to lure their energy. For those who have experienced the more enduring sense of satisfaction through the cultivation of their creative talent, I am sure they will agree with me that this sense of satisfaction is more rewarding and enriches the qualities of life.

We have talked a lot about graceful living and improving the quality of life. This does not fall from heaven but requires constant nurturing, effort and organisation. Youth organisations which you are leading, can play an effective role to help channelise the energy3/-

the energy of our youth to more creative and meaningful ventures. You can through collective efforts, organise activities which can help to mould the habits of our youth so that their abundant energy is properly nurtured for better appreciation of the finer things in life. With proper planning and co-ordinated effort, you can succeed in helping to bring about a better quality of life for our youth and our society.

JUNE 18, 1977.
