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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOON CHOY, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE) AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF
THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AT THE COMMUNITY
CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/WOMEN SUB-COMMITTEE (CCMC/WSC)
LONG SERVICE AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY AT DBS AUDITORIUM
ON SUNDAY, 12 OCTOBER 1980 AT 7.30 PM.

This evening, another 101 MC and WSC members will be receiving their long service awards. You have served in various community centres for ten years. Many of you will continue to serve for 36.5 per cent among the group here tonight are still below 50 years old. I would like on behalf of the People Association to thank all of you wholeheartedly for the time and effort you have spent in serving the public during the last years.

In an occasion like this, it is necessary for members of MC and WSC particularly those who have ten years of experience to ask themselves some pertinent questions: What roles have they played for the centres? Have they been active or passive? Have they contributed enough in terms of ideas to make life happier and more meaningful to our community environment? Have they been merely donating some money or helping to raise them? Or have they been just sleeping partners confining activities to attending monthly meetings? An honest review of this sort is necessary if we do not wish to see a stagnant centre. A society will become stagnant if its leaders do not constantly review the role each and every one can and should play, discover the shortcomings, reassess its human and natural potentials and find a way to tap them for the benefit of society.

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As we enter /2.

As we enter the 1980s, as grassroot leaders, members of MC, WSC and YEC, and for that matter, also the CCC and RC, should reassess the role they could play in the ever-changing circumstances and environment of our society. In the 1960s, MC members in their involvement, directly or indirectly, with the struggle for the country's survival and the creation of a more stable society, needed courage and conviction. By the 1970s, Singapore began to modernise as social unrest engineered by the communists was tamed. The expectations and aspirations of our people, however, became higher and more demanding as our society became more affluent. More sophisticated and naturally more expensive community centres had to be built to meet the needs of the people. Fund raising became an important role for MC members. In this respect, MC members must be congratulated for the significant role they have played during the last decade in making possible the completion of more than 60 centres. The total amount of money raised by the community through the efforts of MC members for the construction of community centres in the past decade was \$20.9 million. No one can deny that it was an excellent effort.

However, it is necessary for MCs in the 1980s to review the role they can and should play. As our society changes, the role of MC will also have to be adapted to meet new circumstances and expectations. The question we should ask ourselves is: Now that we have the streamlined new generation centres, what do we do with them? Twenty-six more of such modernised centres are under construction. Whilst we will still need the services of those with the capacity to raise funds, we are badly in need of grassroot leaders with professional expertise to stimulate recreational and vocational activities to ensure that the centres would become bee-hives and not white-~~elephants~~. Running modern centres requires greater management skills than running the older centres of the 1960s. To be quite frank, in the field of management and programmes of activities, MC members generally have not done enough. Up till now, the ideas and initiatives for programmes still generate from the HQ of People's Association and their field staff. This is particularly so in regard to service-oriented programmes such as the setting

up of day-care centres for children of busy working parents; locating jobs for the aged and other cultural oriented programmes such as learning of music, ballet and other activities. Many CCMCs got into the rut of having to be spoon-fed so far as programming of activities are concerned. Not enough time and energy is channelised into initiating new programmes to improve the quality of life of the people they are serving. Perhaps now that much of the load of fund raising are off their shoulders, MC members can take a more active role in activity programmes. A good grassroots leader should be in touch with the ground and should be in a better position to know the requirements of local residents. A good CCMC should be aware of such requirements and should map out an overall action programme at the beginning of each year. With its estimated expenditure and estimated income from donations and government subsidy, targets can be set for the various activities and a system of monitoring its programmes properly implemented. This naturally requires managerial skills and professional expertise. It may be necessary in some CCMCs to start talent scouting for grassroots leadership, who have the necessary qualifications to fulfil their targets. The 1980s should see the CCMC playing a more positive role in the initiation of programmes. The MCs should be the dynamo instead of the paid organising secretaries who are there to assist them. In the decade of the 1980s, we would like to see a happy balance in the composition of the MCs - the old guards providing the wisdom and experiences particularly in fund raising, the enthusiastic professionals with the managerial skills and programmes expertise and the matured youth leaders with energy and drive to help implement the projects. Co-operation and better understanding among the three groups - the older generation of pioneers, the new professionals and the youth leaders, will ensure better success in the running of our more modernised new generation centres. This spirit of cooperation and harmony is also a stabilising factor in the development and progress of our society.

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