TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER DURING THE ANNUAL REVIEW AND DISPLAY OF THE BOYS' BRIGADE, SINGAPORE BATTALION AT THE VICTORIA SCHOOL ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 28TH 1966.

Battalion President, Bishop Lundy, Members of the Boys' Brigade, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been refreshing for me to have participated in your activities this morning.

Over the last few months, you would have noticed how my colleagues and I have been emphasising and re-emphasising the necessity to reorientate our thinking and the training of our young for we have suddenly found ourselves in a situation where, unless we are prepared to mobilise and organise our resources, our long-term survival can be an extremely precarious affair.

National Archives of Singapore

It is one of the great difficulties of new communities such as ours that nobody can trace his ancestor with the history of this island for more than 150 years. Probably, there may be two or three per cent of the population whose

ancestors were here beyond the 150 years. But it is unlikely that they can trace their antecedents with any accuracy.

This means a society that has no built-in reflexes for community survival. And old and established community develops these reflexes. They are those who look after the soul of a nation; they are those who are born warriors, who have always fought for their country. They are those who were the scholars; they are those who were the administrators.

Our forefathers and some of us have ourselves only recently come here, and the instinct in such a community – a young, migrant community – often is one of individual survival: how to develop the attitudes, the postures which make for the individual existence. Whether it was the British who were in charge, and when the British were pushed out and the Japanese lorded over us, those who made themselves submissive and meek and self-effacing survived after a fashion but without the very important quality which you have listed as one of your objectives: self-respect. You have placed it last, but I am quite sure it is not the least of the human qualities necessary for a meaningful life.

National Archives of Singapore

If we are not to lose our self-respect, then it is our business to build up in our young the reflexes that will ensure community survival, a community with self-respect, with the discipline, with the capacity to discern its collective interests and act effectively in its defence.

And it is in the young that we must place the greatest emphasis for all our efforts. For they are plastic material: young, formative, and they can easily imbibe the virtues and the values which the older generation can never feel so passionately, collectively.

And so it is that over the next few years, you will see, more and more, in every school, in every class-room and in every school-playing field; in gymnasiums, in school halls, the inculcation not of the smart Aleck – the boy who can perform feats of mind or of body … They are necessary individuals, the outstanding performers. But the outstanding performer without an organised group that acts in unison, that feels unison, cannot accomplish anything. And whether it is your brass band, your callisthenics, your civic zeal and love for your community expressed in so many ways, eventually we must turn out in our new generation the qualities that ensure a community that will endure.

National Archives of Singapore

Watching you this morning, I was greatly encouraged for this is purely the voluntary effort of a missionary association.

I hear that most of you joined through the churches or the churches' schools. And whilst the Government was rapidly expanding schools just to gve everybody the ability to read and write, there were fortunately, organisations such as the Methodist Mission who ran, almost out of habit, little group organisations like the Boys' Brigade giving young men and women a sense of collective purpose, of satisfaction and fulfilment in a joint and disciplined endeavour.

I would also like to congratulate you for your contribution to the Nation Day Parade.

Next year, I hope, with wider spread of this effort throughout all our schools, amongst all our young, we shall see larger numbers of boys and girls going through this process of togetherness.

National Archives of Singapore

And over the years, we must ensure that every one of our boys, every one of our girls must be equipped physically and mentally to make a contribution to this community so that, in the end, we will all lead a meaningful life; and, most important of all, a peaceful life. For, if our neighbours know that we are a small but a resolute community, it is likely that we shall enjoy peace.

Once again, my congratulations to you and your instructors, and my exhortation to keep up the kind of activity which I have seen in abundance this morning. My congratulations.

National Archives of Singapore