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SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (CULTURE) AND
MP FOR LENG KEE, DR. OW CHIN HOCK, AT THE OPENING
OF THE FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE'S
EXHIBITION AT LENG KEE COMMUNITY CENTRE, BLOCK 56,
LENGKOK BAHRU, ON SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 1978 AT 3.30 P.M.

About 180 years ago, Thomas Robert Malthus published his well-known essay on the Principles of Population. Malthus' population doctrine postulates that populations tend to increase in geometrical progression while food production increases only in arithmetical progression. The population would continue to outgrow the putput from the limited productive ability of the land until the positive checks such as widespread poverty, famine, war, disease, etc., intervened. Fortunately, due to subsequent technological advances, discoveries of new territories, and the development of contraceptives, Malthus' gloomy predictions of the human condition did not materialise. Nevertheless, Malthus' population doctrine is not entirely irrelevant to many developing countries today where the race between population growth and economic development is still in progress.

In Singapore, we are fortunate to have brought our rapid population growth under manageable control. However, we must realise that this in fact is only a recent development. During the 1950s, the population grew at an average rate of 4.8 per cent or about 62,430 persons per annum. When the PAP government first came into power in 1959, it was confronted with two major problems, namely, massive unemployment and a severe housing shortage. Both problems were mainly due to the rapid population growth after the Second World War. In the 1960s, the population growth rate declined to 2.4 per cent or 43,000 per annum. During the first half of this decade, the growth rate was further reduced to 1.6 per cent per year; and in 1975, it reached an all time low of 1.3 per cent. Because of this achievement in the rapid reduction of its population

growth, Singapore ...2/-

growth, Singapore has become one of the well-know models of family planning in the world.

The success of our family planning policy could not be entirely attributed to the Government's efforts and availability of effective family planning techniques. Equally important are the people's changing attitudes towards family size and family planning. Through education and experience, Singaporeans have come to realise that the greater the number of children in a family, the less will be available for each individual child. A large family size also imposes a heavier burden on the parents. Once the desirability of having a smaller family is established as a norm, it is easy for pragmatic Singaporeans to accept the practice of family planning concepts and techniques.

At the national level, a large population not only means greater demand for jobs and for social infrastructure such as education, housing, medical and health services. It also means that the materials gains accruing from economic development have to be shared by a larger number of people, resulting in lower living standards for everyone. Thus, "Two Is Enough" is not a mere slogan. It is the responsibility of every parent and citizen to put it into practice. I believe it is because of this line of thinking that the Family Planning Association of Singapore has chosen "Towards Responsible Living" as the theme for today's exhibition.

Education on family planning must be a continuous process. At any one time, there will be young couples contemplating their family formation and there will be some less educated people who are not aware of family planning. They must be informed and educated on the desirability of family planning and the availability of the techniques. This exhibition, the film shows and talks organised by the Family Planning Association of Singapore for Leng Kee community centre represent part of this continuous effort.

The exhibition3/-

The exhibition, which we are about to view, features charts, graphs and displays of various family planning techniques as well as videotapes/slides and a free consultation service. The exhibition will last two days, that is, today and tomorrow. Apart from the exhibition, there will be film shows at the compound adjacent to Block 55, Lengkok Bahru, on March 3 and 4 at 8 p.m. and three talks on March 8, 9 and 10 at 8 p.m. to be held in the community hall at Block 168A, Queensway. The talks are entitled "Man and Woman", by Dr. Peter Chew; "Planning Your Family" by Dr. Paul Tan; and "Love and Responsibility" by Dr. C.K. Soh. All of you are invited to participate in these activities.

Finally, may I thank the Family Planning Association of Singapore for providing the technical assistance for organising the above-mentioned activities, and the speakers and organisers for their efforts and time.

I now have great pleasure to declare this exhibition open.

MARCH 4, 1978.
