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SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, ACTING MINISTER FOR CULTURE,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SINGAPORE YOUTH FESTIVAL 1978
ON SATURDAY, 8 JULY 78 AT 5.00 P.M. AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM

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Every year since 1967, the year of the first Youth Festival, Singapore has been treated to a display of energy, teamwork and co-ordination - the fruit of many weeks of combined effort by teachers and youth in our schools. And every year many parents are also participants in this celebration. Every son and every daughter is being watched by proud parents, happy teachers and many more at home.

There is, I think, no danger of any of us here forgetting the importance of lively, vibrant and healthy youth. Tremendous energy and effort is invested in the enterprise that aims at nurturing the growing and highly impressionable into a strong, useful, self-reliant, and self-supporting citizen of society. I hope you will regard the annual Youth Festival not only as a time for our children to show what a splendid exhibition they can put up employing time stolen from those limited hours outside the classroom, but also as a reflection of the educational process itself, as the cooperative effort of all, student, parent and teacher.

Speaking of cooperative effort, we as parents have our share of responsibility in the education of our children. It is true that many of us are either unqualified or untrained to do the jobs of teachers or otherwise too busy with our own careers and businesses to do the job convincingly and objectively. Nevertheless, at least what we could do is to set good examples for our children to follow and to create a conducive home environment.

Naturally, every parent expects the state education system to turn out the ideal he imagines his offspring is capable of attaining. Because of this expectation, many tend to take critical

views of teachers' performance and their abilities. Whatever the shortcomings are, we must realise that teachers will for a long time remain the prime source of instruction in formal education which has taken hundreds of years to evolve. It is therefore important for us to appreciate the teachers' role and give them the due respect and necessary co-operation.

It is sad to note from my personal experience that the role of teachers is not sufficiently appreciated even by those who should know better. This is shown in the fondness some parents have for criticising and denigrating the work of teachers in the presence of their offspring. A teacher's work is painstaking - if he is dedicated. He requires the pupils' respect and collaboration if it is to be done effectively. I suspect more damage, and irreparable damage, is done in the field of education today by unsympathetic parents in this way than by any lapses in a teacher's professionalism.

All education is a collaboration between state, citizen and child, sealed by mutual respect. The Youth Festival is surely a symbol of this relationship, one I am very happy to celebrate with all of you today.

I now have great pleasure to declare this festival open.

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