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SPEECH BY DR SEET AI MEE, MINISTER OF STATE
(COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT) AND (EDUCATION),
AT THE SINGAPORE MANUAL AND MERCANTILE WORKERS'
UNION'S SCHOLARSHIP AND BURSARY AWARDS PRESENTATION
CEREMONY AT THE NTUC CLUB HALL, NTUC ANNEXE,
SHENTON WAY ON SATURDAY, 15 APRIL 1989 AT 1.30 PM

I am pleased and honoured to be here this afternoon to join in your Union's scholarship and bursary awards presentation ceremony. I am especially happy for the 110 recipients of the awards which, I am sure, will go some way towards meeting your educational needs. I hope that the award will spur you to work harder and achieve greater excellence in your studies.

The support demonstrated by the Singapore Manual and Mercantile Workers' Union towards its members and their families, particularly to those who are in need, is encouraging. As a Union, you have worked towards and for your objectives which are: the promotion of good industrial relations between employers and employees, the improvement of the working conditions of members and improvement of their social and economic status, and the raising of productivity for the benefit of members, employers and Singapore.

Singapore is a young country and a relatively new nation. One of the key factors behind our success and progress and our future development has been and is education. Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore, recognised this. Long before he landed on these shores, he had thought of an ambitious educational scheme for

colonies. He was not fortunate enough to complete his education in his youth, but he spent his leisure hours in increasing his knowledge and upgrading his abilities. He even studied the Malay language during the long voyage to South East Asia and was able to write and speak Malay fluently by the time he was in Singapore. During his short stay here, he founded Raffles Institution which today is one of the foremost schools in Singapore, and one which has produced many top students who have contributed to the well-being of the nation, in both political and economic spheres.

Our short history is dotted with many examples of such fine men and women like Sir Stamford Raffles who have helped in the development of Singapore. Like Sir Stamford Raffles, the early Nanyang pioneers like Tan Kah Kee and Gan Eng Seng also placed a premium on education and donated large sums of money for school and university development.

Since independence, our Government has unified our system of education. Every child, is assured of a place in the education system where he/she is accorded an equal opportunity to excel to the limits of his/her ability. This objective is especially important in Singapore where people are our most valuable and only resource. The education system also prepares our children for the process of life-long learning to cope with the constantly changing world, to build a responsible, cohesive, healthy and robust society, and, to meet the economic needs of the country.

Despite increasing cost, the Government is still able to provide affordable education to the population. Scholarships and bursary awards are effective means of helping parents supplement part of the cost of education for their children. The awards also act as a tremendous psychological boost to spur the children to work harder and achieve greater excellence in their studies.

That your Union has been awarding scholarships and bursaries to children of members without fail for the last 15 years is truly commendable. To sustain this for such a long time is no mean achievement. I am told that for today's presentation, the amount of \$17,000 required was raised through a number of fund-raising projects undertaken by members of the Union. I congratulate you and have only these words to add: "Keep up the good work".

Finally, to the recipients of the scholarship and bursary awards, congratulations. I want to encourage you to do your level best in your studies so as not to disappoint your parents and those who have contributed generously to the fund and made the awards possible. I hope that you will maximise the use of the awards and your years in school, keeping in mind the importance of mental growth, physical growth, social and moral development. The school provides you with the environment for growth in all four areas and my wish for all of you is that you will grow up to be able and upright men and women - citizens Singapore will be proud of.

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