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**SPEECH BY DR SEET AI MEE, MINISTER OF STATE
(EDUCATION) AND (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT),
AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL UNITED WAY
CONFERENCE ON "INCREASING VOLUNTARISM TO MEET TOMORROW'S
NEEDS", HELD AT MARINA MANDARIN BALLROOM, SINGAPORE
ON MONDAY, 24 APRIL 1989 AT 12.30 PM**

I wish to express my happiness in your coming to Singapore for the 10th International United Way Conference and in the sharing of your experiences in Voluntarism and Community Work. It wasn't too long ago when I was working as a volunteer and I do appreciate the work you are doing and the contribution you are making to the needy of this world.

On Saturday after our Minister's opening address, Mr James Mulraney expressed that he felt United Way could learn from Singapore's attitudes and experience in Voluntarism and Welfarism - The last two days have clearly shown that each country present can learn from the others present - that there is no end to the sharing and learning process when we deal with community needs and problems.

What has emerged from your discussions and workshops has clearly emphasized the fact that in community work targets set and methods used must be as ciness and professional enterprises. Your concerns are two-fold: fund raising and volunteer mobilization.

To achieve success it is imperative that your plans must be well laid recognising and understanding country strengths, problems and situations. While your aims are similar, your country environment including tax and welfare laws are different. Decisions on what, how, who and when to do what needs to be done are important in strategic planning.

I note that your sessions have been concerned with needs assessment, case development, marketing of the needs to those you want to reach, promoting the message and utilization of various tools to raise the money required.

In keeping with your theme "Increasing voluntarism to meet tomorrow's needs" you have also discussed volunteer mobilization and involvement of members of our community in community work and decision making. We in Singapore can learn and have learnt much from the more experienced United Way countries.

In Singapore, one of the things I would like to see is long-term voluntarism nurtured in our very young. Our citizens of tomorrow should be encouraged to engage in community services at an early age.

It is only through such early exposure, that our impressionable young children will learn the values of caring and sharing. I wish to quote the example of our Sharity Clubs. This was mooted by the Community Chest of Singapore for our school children in 1984 and today there are 35,000 school children involved in Sharity Clubs where their active and early involvement will lay a good foundation for voluntarism.

I have touched on the human resource aspect. The other equally important factor is financial resources without which no voluntary organisation will be able to carry out its mission of helping the less advantaged.

Today charity is 'big business'. Today, for example, in the United Kingdom, the voluntary and charitable sector is fast growing in the light of the Government's policy to privatise and voluntarise statutory services.

Such moves are beneficial and desirable if there are proper monitoring and control procedures to prevent abuses and frauds. We know that not all charities choose to join central fund-raising bodies like the United Way International or the Community Chest of Singapore. For independent charities, we often do not and cannot scrutinize fund-raising activities until allegations are made and scandals surface. It is important, therefore, that legislation be instituted where none exist, and current ones reviewed to ensure that charities are well-managed and operate above-board.

Allow me to conclude by saying that I believe that volunteer work is the best public education and awareness programme we can launch to cultivate a more caring and concerned society. I hope all of you have had a pleasant stay in Singapore and I wish you "Bon Voyage" for your homeward journey.

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