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TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR, MR. STA KAH HUI, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION REGIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL (NORTH) FUN FAIR AT THE PEOPLE'S PARK COMPLEX ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1977, AT 2.30 P.M.

The present generation of Singaporeans are fortunate; especially the young people. The toil and sweat of the generations past plus that of the present senior citizens have brought us to where we are now.

The youths of today enjoy far better educational, social and recreational facilities and amenities compared with the youths of an earlier generation. We have new, modern schools and junior colleges to replace the old ones; we have built modern shopping complexes to replace dilapidated shop houses. Our youths today visit air-conditioned coffee houses instead of dingy coffee shops. A host of new recreational amenities are there, the swimming lagoon at the East Coast, the parks, the gardens and the off-shore islands.

But sad to say in spite of all these facilities and amenities, an increasing number of youngsters have become social misfits: they are restless and restive; they are indifferent and callous; they are socially ill-mannered. Not a few have even taken to drugs as a form of escapism from bottled-up frustration. Admittedly, the high level of industrialization and urbanization achieved in Singapore has in part contributed to this unhealthy development among the youths.

Since this is only a partial explanation as to why some of the youngsters of today are increasingly rebelling against the accepted social norms and patterns of behaviour we have to look elsewhere also for the causes. I think we have to look to the parents, the home and the upbringing. With increasing affluence, parents have tended to spoil their children and over-protect them. Many of the parents are too busy themselves and have little time for the children so the children have more freedom to do what they like. In some cases, the parents even rationalize the misbehaviour of their children to the extent of covering up their wrong doings. We cannot expect them to blame themselves for their children's misdeeds though some do realise it subsequently.

I think time has come for parents to play a more effective role. They should teach their children the good old-fashioned social values. Children should be taught that it is right and proper to obey and respect the old; to be polite and helpful to neighbours and strangers; to behave in a manner that would not bring shame to the family and the community; to be frugal; to be honest and trustworthy. These are the time-honoured values and virtues which should be inculcated in our children and our youths.

A person imbibed with these values and norms will unlikely grow up to become a social misfit. Instead, he would likely be a well-adjusted person, friendly and helpful and

an asset in our society. If our young are brought up with these old-fashioned values, there would be fewer "ugly Singaporeans" around.

On the other hand may I advise those who, because of proper family upbringing, are walking what the Bible refers to as the "straight and narrow path" should not be complacent about their good fortune in not being labelled as social misfits. Neither should they indulge in just counting their blessings in the way the Pharisees did: "Thank God I am not like that sinner over there!" Instead, they should get themselves involved in healthy and wholesome activities. They should volunteer themselves to help those who are in trouble: help drug addicts to "kick" the habit; help to rehabilitate the delinquents; help the bewildered and the confused to find meaning in life; help to bring comfort to the lonely and the depressed.

In so doing, they themselves would benefit: they would find greater fulfillment and meaning in their own lives, thereby improving their reservoir of spiritual strength. If they adopt the "holier than thou" attitude, they would in no time become indistinguishable from those they should be helping.

The organisers deserve to be praised. The hours of planning and hard work put in by the young people are well worthwhile, and they deserve the support of all the people. It is my hope that with the money raised in this fair,

more healthy and wholesome activities could be organized, so that the leisure time of the young people could be more profitably and meaningfully utilized than wasting it on anti-social activities.

It is my pleasure now to declare the fun fair open and wish it every success.