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SPEECH BY MR SIA KAH HUI, MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR, - 1 MAR 1980
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE CREATING WITH PAPER AND
WOOD EXHIBITION AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM, YOUNG PEOPLE'S
GALLERY ON THURSDAY, 21 FEB 80 AT 3.00 PM

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I am glad to see so many of you here this afternoon and especially because you are not here to hear me speak but to see how creativity and self-discipline can transform ordinary common materials like paper and wood into things decorative and pleasing to the eyes. Such work can only bring self-confidence and a sense of achievement to those involved and in addition the knowledge that good things can be made out of ordinary materials provided we set our hearts and minds to mould and use them according to our good sense. Remember these young people who have made this exhibition possible will be our future citizens and leaders in one field or another. We need more and more of this type of young people who would gear themselves and allow themselves to be trained for a life-time of creative activity and thus contribute to the nurturing of the soul of our country. As the Bible says 'What shall it profit a man if he were to gain the whole world and lose his soul'.

It is true we have since independence, set ourselves the task of seeing to the uplifting of the material welfare of the people, digging up the root causes of poverty and unemployment, getting rid of slums and in their places put up decent dwelling units - this task can be said to have progressed to a satisfactory stage.

It has been said that an army cannot move with an empty stomach. Now that our people have a decent roof above their heads, decent clothes and physical needs met, we have to place greater and greater emphasis on meeting the mental and spiritual needs of the people. If the people are hungry, playing the flute and violin to such people would be meaningless. If the art galleries are filled with beautiful paintings such hungry people will not be seen in them. The converse is true also. We cannot have all the people running around spending all their waking hours looking for money to build bigger and bigger houses, buying more and more cars, TVs and other luxuries to the shutting out of all else. Then human beings would be reduced to something like robots. Let me in this connection tell you a story of a rich man and a poor man:

Men are not just physical bodies, having hands, feet, eyes and so on. We are more than all these things which can be seen and touched. We have feelings, emotions, sense of right and wrong, the will to do things be they good or bad. That is why the Bible says 'Men do not live by bread alone'. Men do not just have physical needs but there are mental and spiritual needs and if the mental and spiritual needs are not satisfied then you do not have a whole man.

Now that the physical needs of our people have been met to an acceptable level, more and more attention

needs to be given to meeting the mental and spiritual needs and this is no easy task. We are going to find this less tangible aspect of men's needs more difficult to resolve. However, whenever there are opportunities, cultural and creative arts must be encouraged to the fullest extent. I would like on this occasion express my appreciation to the two art teachers from Parry and Serangoon Garden Secondary Schools for their effort and congratulate the boys and girls involved for having done such a good piece of work. I am sure they have found joy and satisfaction in putting up this Exhibition. May I wish them a very bright future.