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SPEECH BY MR TEO CHONG TEE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (SOCIAL AFFAIRS)
AT THE SINGAPORE RED CROSS ANNUAL PARTY FOR THE AGED
AT MING COURT HOTEL ON SUNDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 1982 AT 4.00 PM

We live in a period of rapid social and economic change. We see the apparent affluence and high standard of living enjoyed by many around us. We have benefitted from the many technological advances made in the fields of social, economic and medical services. Accompanying these changes are demographic changes which affect our social and welfare service policies. Urbanization and industrialization have resulted in the disintegration of the three-generation family structure. Married children move out to form nuclear families of their own, leaving behind their aged parents to lead a lonely life. Longer life expectancy poses problems for the care and maintenance of the elderly members of the family. The 1980 Census of Population revealed that there were some 397,000 one-family nuclei, constituting about 78 per cent of the total households.

Our philosophy has always been that the families should shoulder the primary responsibility for the care of their aged members. Therefore, the bulk of welfare services provided for the aged are for the destitutes who have no one to look after them and who are without means of support. This philosophy of welfare services is still valid in our changing society. The participation of the family and the community in the care and support of the elderly, would relieve the pressure on our scarce social service resources.

While we are clear that the families should be the major care-givers for their aged parents, we must also realise the importance of providing supportive services for them. Residential homes run by the charitable and voluntary organisations could consider admitting the invalid parents of working children. Beds could also be made available for the chronic sick who require

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nursing care because their working children are unable to look after them at home. These homes could also provide day care or respite services for the frail and senile aged persons whose children need a short break from taking care of them full-time. The children, on the other hand, must reciprocate by contributing towards the maintenance of their invalid parents in the homes.

Voluntary organisations which have a large pool of volunteers or have the resources to engage paid attendants, can play a significant role in helping persons with disabled family members staying with them at home by sending a helper to relieve the family care-giver for a short period each day. Supportive services given to these family care-givers will augment the existing caring arrangements and prevent the disabled relatives from being placed in an institution. I would urge the Singapore Red Cross, as well as other well established civic organisations that have the capability and the resources, to consider starting such a pioneer project to help the family care-giver. The operation of such a scheme could be carried out in close co-operation with the Home Nursing Service.

Finally, may I appeal to the voluntary, civic and religious organisations to review their welfare services in the light of social and economic changes that have brought about new needs. I would like to compliment all members of the Singapore Red Cross for their good work and services rendered to the community. I also wish all of you here an enjoyable afternoon.

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