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SPEECH BY MR TEO CHONG TEE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS), AT THE OPENING OF THE  
FIFTH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF APEX CLUBS OF SINGAPORE AT THE HILTON HOTEL ON  
SATURDAY, 13 AUGUST 1983 AT 2.00 PM

Having attended a few functions of the Apex Clubs of Singapore during the last two years, I am happy to be able to attend the Opening of the Fifth National Convention of the National Associations of Apex Clubs of Singapore. Not only do I have a chance to renew my acquaintance with members of the Apex Clubs of Singapore, this function also provides me an opportunity to meet with Apexians from Australia and Malaysia. Besides fostering closer rapport among Apexians themselves, I believe that occasions of this nature will contribute to greater regional understanding and goodwill in general. I do hope that our friends from these two countries will find the Convention rewarding, and their sojourn in Singapore enjoyable.

I notice that, among other items, the Convention Programme includes a forum on "The Role of Senior Citizens in Singapore". This indicates the extent of interest among members of the Apex Clubs of Singapore in an important topic. Since 1980, the Apexians in Singapore have been actively involved in a pioneer community service project for senior citizens - The Day Care Centre for the Elderly at Henderson. A joint project with the Singapore Council of Social Service, the Centre provides rehabilitative services to elderly persons after they are discharged from hospital. It also allows the ambulant and

semi-ambulant elderly residents in the neighbourhood to participate in social and recreational activities. Transport, lunch and refreshments are arranged so that the elderly can spend a full day in the Centre, participating in rehabilitative exercises under professional supervision and interacting with other elderly members while their family members are at work. This is a new concept which enables the elderly to continue living with their families instead of staying in a nursing Home. Since its inception in November 1980, the Apexians have helped raise approximately \$200,000. They should be congratulated for their sustained effort to finance this worthy project.

There is a popular notion among Singaporeans that a person has minimal role in society on retirement; and that, after toiling for several decades, a retired worker should enjoy his twilight years touring a foreign land, engaging in hobbies and activities which he or she wished to engage in during younger days but could not because of lack of time or money or other constraints, or simply leading a peaceful but rewarding life among family members.

But this need not necessarily be the life pattern for the retired workers. With proper planning and coordination involving both the public and private sectors, the picture can be quite different. First of all, steps should be taken to vary the retirement age. Instead of requiring workers to retire at sixty, employers could continue to employ a worker if he is still healthy and alert. He could perhaps be given a different position, one that is less demanding. His salary will of course have to be adjusted accordingly. The older employee's wealth of experience will be of great benefit to the company, particularly at a time when manpower is in short supply. The feeling that they are able to continue

contributing to the well-being of society is the best way to uphold the dignity of the elderly. This should be preferred to the granting of concessions for them.

Instead of waiting passively for services and activities to be organised for them, senior citizens could also actively participate in the planning and execution of such activities themselves. The Singapore Action Group for Elders (SAGE) and the Retirees' Club of the People's Association are good examples of such self-involvement. More able-bodied senior citizens who have experience and ability in organisational work should come forward to organise activities not only for themselves but also for other fellow senior citizens who are in a less fortunate position. There is ample scope for social and recreational activities at the neighbourhood level. I have no doubt that Apexians have many other worthy ideas to contribute on this topic.

On this note, I declare the Fifth National Convention of the National Association of Apex Clubs of Singapore open and wish it a success.

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