

3 MAY 1988

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, 36th Storey, PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 0511. Tel. 2749794/5

88-785-24

Release No.: 41/APR
06-2/88/04/24

SPEECH BY DR TAY ENG SOON, MINISTER OF STATE (EDUCATION),
AT THE WORLD RED CROSS DAY PARADE 1988
AT THE RAFFLES INSTITUTION
ON SUNDAY, 24 APRIL 1988 AT 5.00 PM

I am very pleased to be present at this function which commemorates the 125th anniversary of the Red Cross as a world-wide movement.

The International Red Cross had an unusual and an unlikely start in 1862. It originated in the idealism of a young Swiss businessman, Mr Jean Henry Dunant who was moved by the plight of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war. He proposed that such people should be treated humanely and given medical help by volunteers on both sides of the battlefield. Surprisingly, his ideas caught the attention of a number of governments and philanthropic organisations and within a year, an agreement was signed in Geneva, thus laying the foundation of the International Red Cross.

Today, after 125 years, the Red Cross has come to symbolise hope, humane care and life itself for combatants and non-combatants alike in a world which is still plagued by war. The best test of the success of any organisation is time itself. Today, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has over 250 million members world-wide in 145 countries. In Singapore, we have a steady membership of 8,000 including uniformed members in the school Red Cross groups.

There are, of course, many other groups apart from the Red Cross which are engaged in humanitarian work. Many, no doubt, derived their creed and inspiration from the Red Cross. It is worth pondering upon the fundamental philosophy of the Red Cross movement. Its philosophy is simply this. It is to meet and provide for humanitarian need wherever it is found, in an impartial and politically neutral way without passing judgement or making distinction on the politics of the situation. Thus, Red Cross assistance has gone to the wounded on both sides of a war, to famine or flood victims in all kinds of countries regardless of their political colour. For these reasons, the sincerity and neutrality of the Red Cross has never been in doubt and its humanitarian presence is welcomed by all parties. This is surely an example of sanity and altruism which is only too scarce in a conflict-ridden world.

Our country is, of course, blessed with the absence of any natural disasters or conflict situations. The Red Cross Society here has nevertheless found areas in which it can be of service. It has taken upon itself the task of helping the Blood Transfusion Service by providing a blood collection service. The Red Cross Society accounts for 10 per cent of all blood collected in Singapore.

It also runs an ambulance service to complement the state ambulance service. It has started work among the physically disabled by running a Red Cross Home for such people. Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation or CPR which is an emergency treatment for sudden heart failure cases is a new area which the Red Cross Society is providing training. There is, of course, the school uniform Red Cross groups which receive training in first-aid and discipline. By reaching the young, the Red Cross is helping to inculcate an attitude of humanitarian service in our future citizens.

I commend the Singapore Red Cross Society for its positive contribution to Singapore. Especially noteworthy is its philosophy which is: if there is a humanitarian need, identify it and then do everything possible to meet the need of the people affected by it. May I wish the Red Cross Society many years of service to our society.

oooooooooooooooooooo

MS4/MS6/Pgs.1-3