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SPEECH BY PRESIDENT WEE KIM WEE  
AT THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SENIOR CITIZENS' WEEK  
AT THE ISLAND BALLROOM, SHANGRI-LA HOTEL  
ON FRIDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 10.00 AM

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As a senior citizen myself, it gives me greater pleasure to open this year's Senior Citizens' Week. The objectives of this year's Senior Citizens' Week are three-fold.

- .. Firstly, to arouse a greater awareness among our younger generation of the sacrifices our elders have made in bringing them up.
- .. Secondly, to create an atmosphere and environment where all Singaporeans will respect our senior citizens and show appreciation for their contributions towards nation building.
- .. Thirdly, to remind the younger generation of the values of filial piety and our traditional culture of respect for the elders.

These are indeed laudable objectives.

At a time of economic difficulties, there is a natural tendency for people to be more concerned about their own survival. In grappling with our economic problems we should not lose sight of our social responsibilities.

All things have their natural order and place. If the natural order is upset, there will be no stability and no progress. This orderliness applies just as much to the Government and the community in which we live as well as to the family.

If a family is not well ordered, it is unlikely to be a stable one. There will be frequent quarrels and unhappiness. Similarly, if there is no order in a country, there will be no progress or development. There can even be strife and turmoil.

Anything that strengthens the family bonds and community life will reduce tension and social problems. They extend to good neighbourliness and eventually to harmony among the community.

It saddens me every time I hear or read of children rejecting their parents. Some aged parents are ill-treated and even thrown out of their homes bought through the fruits of their own sweat and toil. Fortunately, these cases are few. We must not allow the problem to grow.

People who do not respect their own elders cannot be counted upon to contribute much to the social well-being of a country. They are self-centred.

It is essential that we start in our own small way, within our homes, to respect our elders and treat them with love and kindness. They have given the best years of their lives for the well-being of their families and the progress and development of the state. They cannot and must not be shunted aside like unwanted animals.

It is also important for the community to help families, who have difficulties with their aged parents, by setting up support services. The Government has initiated a number of such services such as Day Care Centres and Befriender Services. But, the Government alone cannot alleviate all social problems. The community, as a whole, must play its part in helping aged persons and senior citizens, who are in need of assistance. Only then can we claim to be a nation of caring people.

I commend the many voluntary welfare organisations and individuals who have shown that they care and that they are concerned about the well-being of the family, the community and the country.

I would also like to commend the Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE) for chairing the Organising Committee for this year's Senior Citizens' Week and wish them success in all their projects and programmes.

It is my pleasure to declare the 7th Senior Citizens' Week open.

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