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SPEECH BY MR EUGENE YAP, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (LABOUR)
AT THE 120TH FOUNDER'S DAY OF ST ANDREW'S SCHOOL
ON SATURDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER '82 AT 4.30 PM

First of all, I must thank the Principal for giving my wife and myself this opportunity to retrace our steps in this our alma mater; to walk again through these buildings that hold quite a number of pleasant memories for both of us.

Whenever I drive past the school, the familiar sight of the pink sturdy building and the distant tower fill me with a sense of nostalgia - a mixture of pride and a mild awkwardness as some unbidden memories flit across my mind. Of course, on those occasions, there was insufficient time to precipitate a clear vision of these past memories. Therefore, when your Principal called to invite me to be a guest to this function, I was more than happy to accept this opportunity to come back to the school to relive memories of the past in my own sweet time and I hope, with this very short time with you all, to renew acquaintances.

I would like to congratulate the school for its various achievements under the guidance of the Principal and his team of teachers and other personnel. It is heart-warming to see the school after 120 long years still carrying on the tradition of preparing students for life, growing from strength to strength and moving up and on. It is interesting to note the Principal's keen awareness of that very small percentage of students whom he described as maladjusted and to care for that very small percentage. Mr Tan is, I know, a very good mathematician but, but unlike most mathematicians, he has not chosen to "round off" and dismiss that figure. This is one of the characteristic features of St Andrew's - the ability to care and show concern for others, especially those genuinely less fortunate.

I remember, /2.

I remember, in my days when I was in the Junior School, this feature perpetuated in the school even then and some of it must have rubbed off on me for which I have the school to thank. I lived near the school at that time in a house on a little hill and by the side of it, a lane leading to Potong Pasir village. At nights, I would be playing hide and seek with my mother; she trying to get me to bed or to do my work and I making my way to a strategic point above the lane with a powerful torch to light the way for the folks going along the dark lane, which was filled with potholes that could cause twisted ankles, especially to those hawkers burdened with their wares over their shoulders. I must have been greatly impressed by some lessons the Principal or teachers had given to produce such a response in my rather young heart. Today, my position as a Member of Parliament is due, in no small measure, to St Andrew's.

If any parent is looking for a school to send his child to, where he can be sure that his son can acquire knowledge and skill to grow up into a man and become useful to the society in which he is raised, able to fit socially into society, be mentally and spiritually sound, and also be a good citizen, then St Andrew's is the school I would recommend.

That the school has been growing from strength to strength over the past 120 years is itself a living testimony to the superb management style and team spirit that have existed over these years among those who have the charge of running the school - the chaplains and members of the School Board, the principals and the teachers. Some of these chaplains and principals I can still remember as they have their names attached to house colours -

Venn
Loy Fatt
Romanis
Gomes
Hoso
Adams and Chelliah

and, two years ago, the name 'Francis Thomas Drive' puts down on record the contribution of a truly good man.

I remember Dr Chelliah rather clearly in my mind - he was a wizard at mathematics. There were other things that Dr Chelliah was well-known for - his interest in promoting bilingualism, his role in starting the Anglican High School and the St Andrew's Continuation School. His son today is continuing the connection, being the School Supervisor and President of the Old Boys' Association.

Of course, many of us here will remember Tan Lye Whatt as a very effective and fair disciplinarian. Though retired, I am quite sure he is spending his time usefully today disciplining his grandchildren. All these past principals and chaplains have indeed done very well to bring the school to where it is today and I am confident their task is no less earnestly being carried on by the present principal, who himself is bred in the St Andrew's School fashion. He will carry the torch and maintain the strong bond and team spirit between himself and his team of teachers to keep the school growing even stronger.

Both you and I know of schools, companies and even governments which have crumbled through bad management and, therefore, as St Andrew's celebrates its 120th anniversary, we can justly be proud of the school's attainment of such mature years; we can be proud of the school's ability to withstand the buffets of time. We should then appreciate our grand old school even more, especially when it has been said that the fortunes and traditions of a family normally cannot last beyond the second generation. Let me illustrate.

You hear of how a young migrant makes his way in life, willing to take on any kind of job, perhaps because with little education he could not hope for a better life than to work hard and keep long hours working at anything he can manage. But in time to come and with much thrift and simple living, the young man matures to become a successful and rich man. His children may not, of course, appreciate the hours of toil their father went through. They simply take all the luxuries for granted. As a result, they do not think twice about spending the money they have been given - it is a matter of easy come, easy go. The money eventually dwindles and life becomes a struggle when all the money has been squandered. Belonging to a grand old school therefore means the leaders that have

gone before us have been dedicated, disciplined and such wonderful motivators of men that today we are still able to imbibe the very rich culture and tradition of the Saints - a culture that has been able to bind us closely together in a way which enables us so willingly to give a lending hand when called upon to do so; something which no textbook knowledge can provide.

This thinking can also be applied to the State. Our Prime Minister and his team of able men have gone through difficult times and worked hard to bring peace and prosperity and finally achieve their goals. Those who come later, those who inherit the peace and prosperity may not appreciate such conditions as readily as the people who had seen the struggle, faced the dangers, risked their lives and know what it takes to gain the kind of security, build up the kind of society brick by brick. You are the generation that may suffer if things go wrong and so lose out in the future. On your shoulders may one day rest the full weight of ensuring that things do not go wrong. The next generation must not be allowed to hear of our success as a kind of fairy tale.

Therefore, like you feel this deep sense of belonging to the school, I am sure you will feel the deep sense of belonging to your country and will do all you can to preserve the good health, the security and the stability of the country. You will not do anything to destroy it. You will feel you are a part of that very big team, playing your part in it and helping the team to progress steadily along. Do not whatever you do, kick the ball into our own goal which we are sometimes fond of doing, by allowing our emotions to get the better of our logic. By all means play the game, contribute whatever we can to the team, let us help one another succeed - the more successful, the more you ought to help those below succeed. The school can help students to preserve the successful society we live in by giving the students a sense of the past, their heritage and provide them with the ability to think about and function in the present and the future.

In Singapore, we live within the confines of a special set of circumstances which would restrict us in certain ways. We are not Britain, neither are we America. We are Singapore and we have a very big handicap. We do not have any natural resource, except human beings. As such, we must think and solve our

problems differently. We must turn our weakness into our strength. We can do this by teaching our young the importance of hard work; give them proper upbringing and make each Singaporean useful to society.

Our education system is designed exactly for this purpose. But for it to succeed, parents must remember they play a very important and complementary role. While the schools do their part in developing the students, parents must not undo the process by some thoughtless action. It is good to remember that one has to be wicked at times in order to be kind. By giving the child everything he wants can actually spoil his future. This does not help the child. For instance, it is difficult as a parent to stop a child from watching his favourite Kong Fu programme. The parent would therefore rather leave things as they are and so allow the child to degenerate as a consequence instead of overcoming that emotional reluctance to temporarily disappoint the child by switching off the television. On the other hand, students must also realize that when they are checked by their parents, it is motivated by love and for their own good. They should be thankful their parents care.

Another thing that parents can do is to work very closely with the school to provide the child at his most tender age with a set of values - the fear of God, the respect for parents, the difference between right and wrong, the importance of honesty and kindness, so that the child will be able to grow up with these values to guide him. Without these values, it is like a ship without a rudder. This is important especially when the child reaches adolescence where peer group influence, friend to friend horizontal relationships rather than parent to child vertical relationships play a very important part in influencing a person's behaviour in society. If we give our children proper upbringing from young, the chance of an adolescent succumbing to wrong company will be greatly reduced.

Finally, as the school grows and expands, I hope that St Andrew's will painstakingly preserve its character not only in the hearts of men it brings up, but also in its distinctive architecture and characteristic pink, sturdy structure which can withstand the storms of time.