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SPEECH BY BG (RES) GEORGE YONG-BOON YEO, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AT RANK XEROX'S CELEBRATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF XEROGRAPHY AND GALA PERFORMANCE OF MY FAIR LADY AT MANDARIN SINGAPORE ON MONDAY
14 NOVEMBER 1988 AT 7.30 PM

Rank Xerox in Singapore chose, as part of its celebration of 50 years of Xerography, to make a corporate contribution to the Community Chest. By so doing, Rank Xerox sets an example to all corporations in Singapore, big and small, foreign and domestic. By remembering the less fortunate at the same time as you celebrate your success in photocopy technology, you in Rank Xerox affirm a basic human value, that of charity to our neighbours, of caring and sharing.

The Japanese estimate that three per cent of their population are disabled in one way or another. It is probably not very different in Singapore. The Community Chest takes under its wings some 66,000 people, more than two-and-a-half per cent of the population in Singapore. Many of them are disabled. The rest need help because they are old, depressed, troubled or poor. The numbers are much larger than we realise because these people are, for various reasons, often hidden from public view.

There are two reasons why we who are more fortunate should help those who are less fortunate.

The first reason is a practical one. By helping them, we help many of them to help themselves. They become more independent and economically more productive. They become less of a burden to society, better still an asset to the community.

The second reason is more important. We help the less fortunate because it is morally right to do so. We are all imperfect. But every human life, however imperfect, is precious. On this point, the great religions and the great philosophies are in agreement. Without a soul, a society cannot progress and civilization is not possible. Societies break down when individuals turn inwards and care only for themselves. The market economy idealised by Adam Smith works only when there is an underlying moral order that engenders respect for law and regard for human life.

The Community Chest needs \$12 million this year to provide facilities for rehabilitation, special education, therapy, counselling and residential care. It is really not a lot of money for Singapore. If it were only a matter of money we don't need the Community Chest. What is of far greater value is the spirit of voluntarism. The Community Chest has a pool of 3,000 volunteers drawn from all walks of life. Many more participate in Community Chest programmes like Heartstrings and SHARE. Whether organised by or in aid of the Community Chest, such activities encourage Singaporeans to care for one another, especially for those in distress. We become a better society, more accepting of the disabled and the handicapped, more prepared to accommodate their special needs and more willing to help them lead fulfilling lives. Corporate involvement is vital whether in the form of public donation, voluntary service or providing job opportunities to those disabled who, with help and training, can become economically productive. Three per cent are a lot of people. We need many more companies like Rank Xerox.

Singapore will then be a richer society for us all not just richer materially but also richer spiritually.

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