

SPEECH BY THE HON'BLE MINISTER FOR WELFARE
SERVICES ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF
THE PO LEUNG KUK HANDICRAFT SALES CENTRE IN
PENANG ON 30TH NOVEMBER 1972

Chairman Encik Khoo Keat Siew,

Members of the Management Committee of the Po Leung Kuk Home,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am glad to be here this evening on the occasion of the opening of the Handicraft Sales Centre. This Sales Centre marks another successful step in the progress and achievements of the Po Leung Kuk Home Committee so ably led by you, Mr. Chairman.

I understand that the name Po Leung Kuk itself is derived from three Chinese characters which means "Protection of the Good". It is an acknowledged fact that all human beings are capable of developing into good citizens, learning patterns of behaviour that are socially acceptable. Unfortunately, however, some persons through no fault of their own, and often as a result of contact with unwholesome environment have learned behaviour that does not fit the norms of society. There is need, therefore, for institutions like the Po Leung Kuk to be established to correct this misguided behaviour, to protect and develop the good which can still be found among the bad in such persons. It is the task, therefore, of us all to find what is good to build on these good traits so that we can influence and re-direct our misguided girls and women to become more socially acceptable and contribute towards the betterment of society.

In this task we require the active participation and support of public-spirited persons such as you who are gathered here today. On our part, we will continue to lend our interest, encouragement and support. We will continue to foster the growth of voluntary organisations not only because it will give community members opportunity to display their public-spiritedness, but because we want such efforts in partnership with Government ensure a fuller complement of welfare services.

Thus I am glad that your Committee has established this Handicraft Sales Centre and anticipated my call recently to all voluntary organisations which have vocational training programmes and craft centres to establish a common Sales Centre for the display and marketing of articles produced by such organisations. I therefore would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and your equally foresighted Committee on your pioneering in this activity. With this Centre you will not only tap another source of revenue and thus add to the funds that you have for the improvement and development of your service, but you will be continually spurred by the natural laws of supply and demand to produce goods of high quality which are also competitive in price. Such a venture will demand constant evaluation and assessment of your training programmes so that the women and girls will be trained only in skills for which there is demand. Whilst economic return is always an important consideration, there is also the intangible return which cannot be costed or quantified but is equally important and significant. That return is the satisfaction, the confidence-restoring, morale-boosting effects on the women and girls to see their efforts appreciated by the public. Good sales and brisk demand cannot but help to restore self-confidence and self-esteem so essential in the reforming process of any treatment planned for offenders.

Marketing of products made by Social Welfare institutions presents a problem not confined only to voluntary organisations alone, but also to my Ministry. That is why I have urged all agencies to consider the establishment of a combined Sales Centre in every State. Marshalling the expertise of all parties concerned, we should find little difficulty in establishing a combined Welfare Sales Centre in every State. Such a Centre will have many benefits. It will help the public to understand and know what is being done for the socially disadvantaged segments of our population so that they will feel compelled to support these efforts. It will form a marketing agency for all welfare establishments. It will provide for better coordination and development of resources and more effective utilisation of available resources. It will lead to constant evaluation and assessment of training programmes and perhaps to specialisation by each agency. Finally, it can add to the general effort of boosting tourism, as a combined Sales Centre located in an easily accessible area will provide interesting and easy shopping for tourists and visitors.

I hope your Sales Centre will develop into just such an establishment. You can be assured of the support of the Malayan Social Welfare Council, of which I am the President, in this new and praiseworthy venture.