

Opening of Mu Kuang New Building, 28th. November, 1972

Mr. Canning, Honourable Guests, Parents, Teachers, and Students:

Today is called our school opening day and graduation ceremony, but it might equally be called our Thanksgiving Day, as we are so full of gratitude for what we have here today in this new school building.

When this educational work first began about 18 years ago, the founders had two hopes:

1. They hoped to provide education for less privileged children
and
2. They hoped to erect a building where students could study peacefully and quietly.

Both these aims were frustrated for many years. There were plenty of underprivileged children, but it was almost impossible to offer them education within the financial means of their families, without subsidy and without a proper building.

We had neither subsidy nor building, and had to manage in unsatisfactory rented premises.

But today shows that sometimes dreams can come true, though I believe that real fulfilment can only come from hard work - and we did have to work hard. And now we have a school even beyond our dreams, which we are able to run for a great number of children who would otherwise be unable to continue their education.

I now want to express thanks to those who have helped to make this hope a reality.

1. First I want to thank the Director of Education and his staff, not only for their presence here today, but also for giving us their help and guidance during the building of the school.
2. I wish to thank all the other Government Departments that had any part in the planning and other work connected with the building and registration of the school.

3. My special thanks go to our architect, Mr. P.K. Chan, who has done everything in his power to produce the maximum architectural beauty at the minimum of cost. Mr. Chan would feel rewarded if he could read the appreciation of our students expressed in their compositions, and how they love this building, so spacious and lovely.

I should like to have been able to express my thanks to the father of our Architect, Mr. Chan Nam Cheong, but unfortunately he passed away before the building was completed. Mr. Chan Nam Cheong gave a generous donation to the building, and you will see his memorial tablet at the entrance to this Assembly Hall.

4. I also wish to thank Mr. Tam Cheng Wai and Mr. Tam Pak Wah of the Hoover Construction Company, and all their sub-contractors and workers, who ^{labored} ~~worked~~ hard throughout the hot and wet July and August weather to complete the building in time for this school term. I was especially moved to see the workers laying

stones, with one hand and holding umbrellas in the other. That made me realise the hardships of the building trade in the summer.

5. I wish to thank the American Women's Association of Hong Kong, for their handsome donation to purchase Physical Education equipment. Physical Education is a favourite subject with most of our students, and I am sure that the American ladies would be delighted to see how much pleasure they have provided for our children.

To turn to the subject of education, I was myself fortunate in having been educated in a fine new school in beautiful surroundings, and perhaps I never realised until now what a difference that can make in a person's life; in Hong Kong I have seen how little beauty there is in most of the areas where our children live and study. But since we came here to this new building, our students seem to be different people: they can run about to their heart's content; they can walk in the garden and look at the flowers, or help to plant them; they can sit in their free study room and think quietly,

or learn from the beauty spread out before them across the harbour and in the hills. We believe that this environment has had a tremendous influence on the conduct of our students, because ⁿow they are content, and have a school to be proud of. Each day they go back into the ugly industrial area below, but at least in school they have learned that life is more than sweat and toil, more than pushing through crowded streets walled in with concrete, more than the fear of robbery, more than just cramming for examinations. And when our children are happy, the whole atmosphere of the school is happy.

Our students can now enjoy singing in the beautiful music room that faces the harbour and fills their lungs with good, fresh air. There are activities for all, and we hope soon to provide still more. Next year we hope to launch out into new subjects, art, Domestic Science, Technical Drawing, and Typing. We hope soon to have our library in order. We have many books, some old, some newer, but not all suitable, and we need time and more workers to catalogue them.

At the end of this meeting, I hope you will accompany me on a visit round the school, and wish now to apologise that there is still much to be done as we have had the use of this building for less than three months, and some parts are still not quite ready for use. It will take at least a year before we are able to utilise all the facilities here.

It is our aim to provide as many facilities as we can for our students, to give them an outlet for their energies and interests and knowledge beyond the facts memorised from books. We believe that this is a constructive way to combat what is commonly known as our "Youth Problem", but which might more reasonably be called a problem of our whole society. We hope that more schools of this type will be built in similar surroundings, so that other children will have opportunity to learn higher and truer values.

Before I close, let me thank the many others who have helped us by their donations both for equipment and for scholarships. And now, my own personal thanks to my teachers from all our various schools. Some have worked with us for 18 years, some for 10 years, and some were originally our own Mu Kuang students. Without these faithful and hardworking colleagues, I admit that I could have done nothing at all. I owe this school to their guidance and self-sacrifice. This is a debt I owe that I shall never be able to repay to them.

I can only say - THANK YOU.

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