

DBS at 145

By Hanson Ying Huang

11 November 2014



DBS 1921 at Bonham Road

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My congratulatory message to DBS at its 145th, during a rather difficult period for HK.

“Inasmuch as we in HK have tolerated an essentially unjust society and benefited from it, we must share in the guilt of any crime and violence that come out of it.”

“In one sense no democratic society can survive unless all of its members are prepared when necessary to make trouble for those in authority – and by this I mean all of us who have any authority at all. We have to be kept on our toes.”

Full text:

DBS at 145

I like to talk, at great lengths, about matters I know well, or not.

But during these difficult times when we are a family divided, the father divided against the son, and the son against the father, and brother turned against brother, I cannot but look back and echo a voice of calm for guidance and proper bearing.

After the 1967 leftist riots when HK society was even more divided than today, Jimmy Lowcock, even as he condemned the violence, kept his usual equanimity.

In his Headmaster’s Report for Speech Day, he departed from the printed text and added the following observation:

“Inasmuch as we in HK have tolerated an essentially unjust society and benefited from it, we must share in the guilt of any crime and violence that come out of it.”

He then returned to the text and gave the following prescription:

“In one sense no democratic society can survive unless all of its members are prepared when necessary to make trouble for those in authority – and by this I mean all of us who have any authority at all. We have to be kept on our toes.”

That became the impetus for a series of reforms at school; it was as natural as if it were part of our genes.

145 years ago, DBS was founded to heal the wounds of an essentially unjust society. We are all beneficiaries of that largesse; it behooves us to continue that tradition, to serve and to lead this family of ours.

HK today is no longer essentially unjust, and we have been spared the worst. But there are serious inequities. We, the haves and have-nots, the enfranchised and disenfranchised, all deserve better. We need to work out a new narrative for our common future. After all, we are family.

Hanson Y Huang '68

Senior Prefect

Boarders' Senior Prefect

Arthur House Captain

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Attachment: SJ Lowcock, Headmaster's Speech, Speech Day, 1967

*Mr S. J. Lowcock
H.B.S.*

Diocesan Boys' School,
Headmaster's Speech - Speech Day, 1967.

In presenting my report I wish to say a few more words about the fine way in which this school underwent the civil unrest of last May and the resulting subsequent inconveniences. Staff and boys alike remained calm and kept level heads. Schoolwork and examinations went on their normal way, and after-school activities attracted their usual attendance. During the summer vacation other activities were instituted and were taken advantage of by a good number of boys. Above all, the boys kept open minds, reading, watching events and evaluating the different views, not letting their thinking be disproportionately influenced by propaganda and exaggeration.

The school thus stood the strain very well. However, this must not be interpreted simply as a success for our strength or our patience. Rather the very fact that a small group could create such chaos out of a fearsome reservoir of hatred was a judgement passed on our entire community. It was a judgement on our government, on our industrial structure, on our churches and on our schools. Inasmuch as the situation was allowed to reach the level of violence that it did, all these have been judged and, to our collective shame, found wanting.

Are there any in this gathering who believe that we should now spend our energies 'witch-hunting'? The culprits are not hard to identify, they have made no attempt to hide themselves. We have a great deal in Hong Kong to comfort ourselves with and to wish to preserve. We have a stable administration, a well-organised city, much wealth and many good schools in which we can safeguard our future and perpetuate our success. The temptation is great to think that we can simply rid ourselves of trouble-makers and return to the old comfortable way of doing things.

May I suggest that if the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room after the Crucifixion were concerned only with apportioning the blame for the death of their Master they would very quickly have arrived at a conclusion and that would have been the beginning and end of the Christian Church. It was only through their identification of themselves with the culprits that the Cross could have any meaning to them -- and to us.

Inasmuch as we in HK have tolerated an essentially unjust society and benefited from it, we must share in the guilt of any crime and violence that came out of it.

I think it valid to say that emotionally and outwardly we should remain calm, but that inwardly every one of us should be in turmoil. There is no room or time now for patching the fabric of our society; we have to rethink our way completely.

I want to stress here that earlier I said "our" troublemakers, because they ARE ours, and in the main they are troublemakers only because we have allowed them to become such. After all, we are all potential troublemakers. In one sense no democratic society can survive unless all of its members are prepared when necessary to make trouble for those in authority -- and by this I mean all of us who have any authority at all. We have to be kept on our toes.

~~the~~ Hong Kong's present troublemakers, barring the professional agitators and those who live luxuriously while railing at the system, are the mass of 'have-nots' who feel so deprived that they are willing to abandon morals and rational thinking in order to raise themselves. They are easy targets for political propaganda directed against the 'haves'.

I venture to say that among the 'have-nots' of 1967 were the rejects of the Joint Primary Six examinations of the late 1950's and early 1960's, the tens of thousands of twelve-year-olds who were, and still are, abandoned by society and left to fend completely for themselves in a community where competition is increasingly more severe. This group, together with secondary school drop-outs along the way, has grown up resenting the whole community, and it may well be true that they form the major portion of those who have been made use of as agents of destruction.

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So what have we been doing, what are we doing about this educationally? In our secondary schools we have the fortunate minority. We have taught them to pass examinations, we have taught them how to win respectability for themselves, we have even taught them to be nice to the less fortunate and to share some small portion of what they have with them. But we have failed to teach them to respect the less fortunate, we have not inculcated the lesson that we are, each and every one of us, our brother's keeper.

If we are to reconstruct this community to make of Hong Kong a better place for all we must have at the very beginning of the effort a fundamental change of attitude, and this must originate in our schools. There must be a thorough reversal of values, so that the educated will respect the uneducated, the righteous will respect the unrighteous, the governors will respect the governed, the wealthy will respect the poor so that the former's giving will not deprive the latter of his self-respect. The 'haves' must learn to have less not as a sacrifice to convention but in realisation of the fact that every other man born has a right to human dignity and self-respect. 24

Yes, I am justifiably proud of the way in which DBS stood up to the test of danger and despair. It now remains to be seen whether the lesson has been learned, whether this coming generation will take, each upon himself, the judgement passed on us all so that we can begin to build a society wherein all may have a sense of belonging and unrestricted access to the sources of self-respect. //

Let us never forget May 1967 and what it really means for us.

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