

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC.MAR.56/68(DEF)

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE, MR. WEE TOON BOON, AT THE PASSING-OUT PARADE OF THE FIRST BATCH OF VIGILANTE CORPS NATIONAL SERVICEMEN AT THE POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL, THOMSON ROAD, ON SUNDAY, MARCH 31, AT 4.45 P.M.

I am very pleased this evening to inspect the first batch of Vigilante Corps members called up for training under the National Service Act. You were enlisted in September last year and in a short period of six months you have completed basic training. The Vigilante Corps was organised by the people in 1964 of their own volition when the country was troubled by racial chaos and sabotage during the period of Indonesian confrontation. The Corps offered much assistance to the police to maintain law and order.

Our country, Singapore, is vigorous and energetic, the people are hard-working, intelligent and are not afraid of any difficulties or hardships. These qualities in our people have been praised by foreigners. Nevertheless, Singapore is a newly independent country and its historical background and social conditions are coloured very greatly by its colonial past. In the context of our independence it has become necessary for us to change our outlook and to overcome shortcomings which history has bestowed upon us. There is a lack of a sense of belonging and cohesion amongst our people. Our forefathers came to this country primarily for the purpose of earning money. They remained isolated with a lack of communal sense; they were indifferent to the situation around and showed no concern at all about the difficulties and problems of their fellowmen and of the country. With our independence there is a perceptible change of attitude but there still remains the great task of fostering a sense of belonging and cohesion so necessary in a young multi-racial society. There is evidence, however, that the younger generation has developed a new outlook but this outlook is to be reinforced by greater civic consciousness if we are to develop into a disciplined society, with mutual understanding and tolerance amongst our people of various racial origins. Nation-building demands that we overcome our shortcomings and change our attitude to think of ourselves primarily as Singaporeans as the common bond that unites all our citizens.

The training programme for the Vigilante Corps was designed with great care with the basic objective of instilling into our young men qualities which are necessary to help them to contribute effectively in the great task of nation-building. The training programme comprised three main elements namely physical training, general knowledge and civics.

Strong healthy bodies are undoubtedly essential, for physically-fit persons are better equipped to withstand the stresses and strains of life. Activities such as camping, big walls, swimming and various other outdoor

activities have been organised for you. Mere participation in these activities is insufficient, what is more important is the discipline and the sportsmanship that they build up in you, for these qualities benefit you as a citizen and through your work your fellow citizens. You have also learned the fundamentals of elementary law and first aid; in short the training that you have received has armed you with qualities that will make you the type of citizens that our country requires. However, though a robust body and basic elementary knowledge will help you in your task of nation-building, they will become barren and ineffective if civic consciousness is not developed at the same time. Within the fold of civics are embedded certain basic and vital principles without which we might turn into instruments of destruction rather than instruments of construction. We must know and love our country which in turn means that we must be tolerant and understanding, we must be dedicated to our work, imbibe greater knowledge and respect life and property. The most powerful armoury that any country can possess is patriotism and dedication of its people. If these qualities are absent then all the training in the world will not do any good. The training that you have received has also taught you the relationship between the individual and nation. You have realised that the State provides the basic needs of the individual as a citizen and that in turn the individual as a citizen has basic obligations. This is a complementary relationship inherent in our democratic system of living. The code of conduct which has been prescribed for the Vigilante Corps members must not remain as mere prints in a pamphlet to be read and forgotten; it will have meaning and purpose only if it is translated into concrete actions and deeds in everyday life. I am sure that you will make good use of what you have learnt, and live up to your motto "From Each His Best."

I now wish to express my appreciation to the officers in charge of training and to all personnel concerned for the part that they have played in successfully training our national servicemen in the Vigilante Corps. I must also congratulate the members of the corps for successfully completing the course and this is manifested by the excellent performance that they have given today at this ceremony. Among you there are some whose performance has been outstanding for which they are being given awards, I congratulate them.

MARCH 31, 1968.

(Time issued: 1715 hours)