

MC: JUL/59/68(CULTURE)

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO MINISTER FOR CULTURE, INCHE SHAARI TADIN AT THE MONK'S HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL'S ANNUAL SPEECH AND PRIZE-GIVING DAY ON 1.8.68 AT 10.00 A.M.
(EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY: 1ST AUGUST 1968 AT 10.00 A.M.)

I am very happy to be able to attend your annual prize-giving day.

Your principal has just outlined the year's achievements in the sporting and scholastic arena. These achievements have no doubt been matched by the acquisition of tolerant values and attitudes not only by means of the social science subjects but also by actual contact in the sports field, such as only an integrated school like yours can achieve with maximum impact.

Therefore, I will speak on the new educational system that is to be reshaped and recreated from the present system. This subject which has lately received so much coverage in the local press is one which you should get to know as intimately and well as possible.

The Government's decision to halt the building of any more academic secondary schools is a natural consequence of its broad plan for strengthening technical and vocational education. Accordingly the Technical Education Department of the Ministry of Education was created. Thus with immediate effect there will be a freeze on the number of academic secondary places. Later on, when the new system requiring all secondary pupils to take technical and vocational subjects for two years will have been in force long enough for an evaluation to be made, some existing academic secondary schools will probably have to be converted into technical and vocational institutions. This, together with the construction of new non-academic schools, will enable the Government to gradually but completely correct the present overwhelming imbalance in the educational system.

There are now only 18,000 pupils in technical and vocational schools compared with 144,000 in the academic stream, that is, in the ratio of 1 to 8. It should perhaps in fact be the other way about. With the white collar job market completely saturated, and with plans for industrialisation correlated to the availability of many more workers with blue collar skills, it is vital that this disproportion should be rapidly eliminated. This radical change cannot be accomplished by mere manipulation of classroom places. Teachers must also be available in the correct proportions. The reduction of academic enrolments and the expansion of technical and vocational enrolments must be accompanied by a programme of teacher retraining. It is obvious that much remains to be done.

When the plan is completely implemented, another dimension will have been added to our educational system. Hitherto, we have been using education as an instrument of social transformation, particularly in the area of instilling social consciousness and national loyalty. This is the way things should be. But this will not go far enough to meet the needs of social modernisation. Considering that the Republic spends some \$151 million each year on education, from this massive investment must therefore come more concrete dividends.

This drastic change in the educational structure is an attempt to correlate our G.N.P. with education which calls for the type of education that imparts industrial skills and expertise, not merely the "genteel" subjects which though indispensable for graceful living, are inadequate by themselves in our rapidly industrialised society, and certainly incapable of being the pass-port to the lucrative white collar job that it used to be in the pre-industrialisation era.

This switch to technical and vocational education on a massive scale is to be seen as part and parcel of the other long-term adjustments the Government is making in the social, cultural, educational and other fields to infuse our population with new ideas and values so as to enable them to cope adequately with the problem of existence in the ultra-modern world.

May I congratulate the prize-winners on the splendid performance, and hope that they and those who have not won any prizes today to continue to seek and strive in the classroom as well as in the sports field.

31ST JULY, 1968.

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