

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MR. A.J. BRAGA, AT THE HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL SOCIAL, AT THE ADELPHI ROOF GARDEN, ON THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1957, AT 5.15 P.M.

Singapore is among the first countries in South East Asia to realise the contributions which health education can make to prevent disease and to conserve the health of the people. We shall never have a thoroughly healthy people until the people themselves know and appreciate the value of positive health as opposed to a state of not suffering from any demonstrable illness or abnormality.

Health education has long been an important activity of all public health personnel. Only relatively recently, however, has it come to be considered as a major function in public health. The transition that has occurred has been gradual. In the earlier eras of public health which dealt with the sanitation of environment and the control of communicable diseases, public health activity was interpreted to consist largely of doing things to and for people relying upon legal force wherever necessary. With the development of the new interpretation of public health as the sum total of personal health, there has come about an appreciation of the need to do things with and by the people.

This is a more difficult task than the establishing of wholesale preventive measures in which the people themselves are not required to take the initiative. It involves the fullest use of public health education so that citizens may understand and co-operate with activities necessary for their own welfare. Important as are the laws under which the health authorities operate, of far greater importance is intelligent action on the part of the individual and of the community.

Health education, to be a success, must be educative, sustained, continuous, planned and systematic. It envisages and aims at the change of behaviour and controls the conduct of the individual with regard to health. The Gospel of health education should be carried to the people both in the centre of the city and in the distant rural areas all over Singapore.

To bring the people into the sphere of public health education the setting up of a health education council was considered necessary by the Government of Singapore as far back as 1951. A special Committee was appointed by them for a preliminary investigation into the establishment of a Council. A public meeting of all bodies interested in health education was convened in Singapore in 1954 and a special Committee was appointed to draft a constitution. In order to ensure that the Council should not be embarrassed because of want of funds, the present Government approved an annual grant of \$20,000 to the Council, and on August 16, 1956 I had the pleasure of inaugurating the Singapore Health Education Council.

The Council at present has a membership of 28 organisations, including Government Departments, City Council and University of Malaya. The Constitution of the Council permits it to hold one social meeting annually. It is not intended that long speeches should be made, but rather that the members should get together to discuss problems of health education particularly with members of the Executive Committee. This should enable members to give ideas on health education to the Committee members who may be able to incorporate them in future programmes. As I said

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earlier, the idea of the Health Education Council was to bring the people into the health education orbit, and your views and ideas on public health education will be very valuable in planning future activities.

I have followed your work with much interest and satisfaction. I know how successfully you conducted the World Health Day Exhibition, how you had brought in original ideas and purpose in starting competitions in health subjects; in preparing pamphlets, posters and other propaganda material; in promoting active immunisation against diphtheria; in endeavouring to produce a film on "Clean Food" in the future. There are many other activities of yours which merit the approbation and support of the people of Singapore.

What gives me particular pleasure is the fact that your endeavours and their fruits are not just the result of Governmental or local authority action, but the combined result of Government, local authority, voluntary organisations and members of the public acting as individuals to bring energy and drive into the subject which has never been easy to deal with.

I must, therefore. Ladies & Gentlemen, take this opportunity, while wishing you well in the future years to come, to congratulate you most heartily on the achievements you have already been able to record and the progress you have, in so short a period, been able to make.

JULY 25, 1957.

(Time issued 1500 hours).