

SPEECH BY MR LIM GUAN HOO, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(HOME AFFAIRS) AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF SEMINAR  
'NEW ERA FOR THE SPECIAL CONSTABULARY' AT THE  
DBS AUDITORIUM ON SUNDAY, 22.8.76, AT 9.30 A.M.

In order to bring my talk in line with the theme of the Seminar to-day - "A New Era for the SC", I am duty bound to highlight some positive aspects of the progress of the SC.

2 One of the salient points that has attracted much attention is the dramatic drop of the absentee rates. The monthly average absentee rates in the SC at all Divisions/Units for the period Nov 75 - Jul 76 are as follows:-

Nov 75	-	7.42%
Dec 75	-	6.62%
Jan 76	-	5.32%
Feb 76	-	5.35%
Mar 76	-	3.18%
Apr 76	-	2.1%
May 76	-	2.1%
Jun 76	-	1.9%
Jul 76	-	1.55%

From the above, the impression is gathered that the absenteeism devil seems to have left the SC after the 1975 Christmas, or rather, since Nov 75 when we held the SC Officers Annual Dinner. Since Nov 75, there has been a constant downward trend in respect of absenteeism.

3 The achievements of some Divisions/Units are worth mentioning. Their absentee rates have been kept well below 1% as at Jul 76:-

<u>Div/Unit</u>	<u>Strength</u>	<u>Absentee Rate</u>
A	502	0.27%
C	787	0.75%
PRU I	440	0.54%
PRU II	421	0.4%
TC (PA Training Centre)	163	0%
FSU (Field Service Unit)	592	0.27%
Total =	<u>2,905</u>	

FSU is a strange example. In Nov 75, its absentee rate was 18.17%. The Unit was then almost a menace to the SC in the context of absenteeism. This has prompted the NS officers of the Unit to beat their brains out to rid their Unit of the absenteeism menace. They came to the Police Station more often than required under the "3 times a month" system. As a result, absenteeism began to skid down with full speed. 'C' Division has an absentee rate of 22.3% as at Dec 75 and 0.75% as at July this year. This is yet another example. To all those Divisions/Units with absentee rates below 1%, may I extend my heartiest congratulations on the "miracle" created.

4 At this juncture, one would tend to be a bit harsher in assessing the achievements of those Divisions/Units with absentee rates ranging from 1% to 3%. I may add that the Community Security Force which has an absentee rate of only 1.65% as at July this year has now been slightly overshadowed by the SC's 1.55%. But there is a new threat to the SC and that is from the Central Training Base of the VC. The reorganisation of the VC Central Training Base has been finalised. As a result, 18 out of a total of 23 units have now been able to maintain an unprecedented absentee rate record i.e. 0%.

5 The SC's 0% to 0.54% achieved by the 6 Divisions/Units are nevertheless a good beginning to usher in a golden age for us. It is a golden record collectively created by a total of 2,905 NSmen! What are the contributory factors that make this possible? No doubt, the tightened disciplinary control has something to do with this. The new anti-absenteeism measures, the setting up of the PNS(F) Provost Unit have given as much deterrent as detergent to remove this organisational menace. But in cases where the absentee rate has dropped well below the tolerable point, the leeway and breathing space provided do not seem to have been utilised. So there are bound to be some other factors that have helped to maintain the heartening record.

6 Now let us bring up some relevant subjects for a deeper study. Through the discussion of these matters, we will be able to obtain an insight as to how the SC is undergoing a rapid transformation into a more effective organisation. In doing so, we can also touch on the pros and cons that have to be reconciled so that each issue will be given an appropriate solution.

7 First, the organisation of the SC and our operational patterns. A Neighbourhood policing scheme having been successfully tested in 4 Divisions has now been put into practice. Neighbourhood Policing Units (NPU) will soon be seen mushrooming in all Divisions. The re-structured unit formation will provide more posts for more supervisory officers in the unit. The unit can then achieve a closer inter-rank rapport. This unit structure is to be taken as a norm for all those attached to the Divisions. Each Division has a certain number of neighbourhoods demarcated for the policing service by the NPUs. Under the "one NPU one Neighbourhood" system, you will be able to reap the benefits of your familiarity with the areas or estates you live in. Your services will therefore take the form of community-based policing.

8 You may like to ask: whether the CSF is following the same system? The answer is: theirs is slightly different from yours. Their operational areas are divided into a total of 242 sectors. The size of a sector is not necessarily comparable to that of a SC neighbourhood. Then there is the problem of co-ordination. Whenever possible, we would like to avoid duplication of efforts. But where it is necessary to have both SC and CSF patrols, we would consider the geographical coincidence of an SC neighbourhood and a CSF sector as something inevitable. It is pertinent to mention that the CSF, after having gained some experience through trials and errors, has now been able to bring about an average of 30.7 crime-free nights for the people living in its sectors. My advice to the SC is that if the CSF is able to score such an achievement, there should be no reason why the SC cannot make the grade.

9 I would like to emphasise that the NPUs should strive to bring down the incidence of crime in their respective neighbourhoods. The NPU leaders should, apart from doing the routine duties, pay more attention to the changes of crime patterns and crime-prone areas within their neighbourhoods. They should make more contributions to the formulation of anti-crime plans and strategies to keep their neighbourhoods crime-free. With more and more white areas appearing in our security map, our security situation will naturally be further stabilized.

10 To enable the NPUs to operate with higher efficiency and effectiveness, the unit members should be given better equipments. They can also be deployed in team policing.

11 Let us now switch over to another subject: Utilisation of Manpower.

12 Following a policy adjustment, many SCs with tertiary educational qualifications have been promoted to join the leadership rank. Emphasis should now be placed on a further adjustment to the rank structure. We have to span the gap between the Sergeant and the Special Constable. If the effectiveness of an army depends very much on good NCOs, Police Sergeants and Corporals likewise will have a key role to play in a unit. It has now been decided that to bring the SC rank structure in line with that of the Regular Force as far as the "rank ladder" is concerned, provisions should be made for selected Special Constables to be promoted as Corporals. It is estimated that about 2,500 posts of Corporals will be filled in due course.

13 We have to point out that promotional opportunities are to be given to all deserving NSmen including graduates and non-graduates. Non-graduates who have proved their worth can also be considered for promotion to the post of a senior officer. Our policy will not be perfect without giving fair consideration to those who are without paper qualifications. But where paper qualifications are backed up with actual performance, it is also our duty to see that the leadership materials are not wasted unnecessarily.

14 It has to be reiterated that appointments and promotions of SCs to higher ranks will only be offered to deserving and willing officers without any element of compulsion.

15 Some professional men in the SC have expressed their desire to be deployed in a way more relevant to their professional speciality. This we have done, but to a reasonable extent. Dentists have been encouraged to do something for the SC Dental Service. Doctors have been encouraged to do something for the SC Drug Counselling Service. Journalists have been asked to help in the editorial work of the 'Rollcall'. Lawyers have been asked to give lectures on law subjects. However, this does not mean that professional men cannot be deployed in a way less relevant to their professional capacity. They can be so deployed provided their leadership qualities are sufficiently and suitably utilised.

NSmen with educational background are now encouraged to play an active role in providing leadership to the various NFUs. They are the souls of the NFUs. The revised rank structure and other efforts we have made can only provide the skeleton, the flesh and blood. Without the soul, the NPU would become a lifeless thing.

16 Now you may like me to touch on the pros and cons on the diversification of the roles for the SC. In the process of re-organising the SC we have tried to give greater variety to the services by the SC. It is because of this, among other reasons, that we have introduced the SC Drug Counselling and Rehabilitative Service. The objectives of deploying part-time SCs for this service are:-

- (a) to enable them, particularly those with higher qualification to play a meaningful and challenging role in countering the drug abuse problem as part of their National Service obligation;
- (b) to supplement the efforts of the regular Probation and Aftercare Officers in supervising and rehabilitating drug addicts admitted to and released from the Drug Rehabilitative Centre.

17 Apart from the Drug Counselling Service, we have also launched a new scheme code-named "Project Libra", for an experiment in 'G' Division. NSmen were deployed in teams to locate and identify and then befriend the wayward youths in some housing estates. More than 100 young boys have been contacted and have become regular visitors of the Joo Chiat Police Station to take part in the organised youth activities. These young boys, if not ushered to the right path, would have every possibility of being misled and contaminated by the criminally-inclined and dragged into the criminal world. The SCs who are undertaking the scheme have indeed done a good job. In view of the success of the pilot scheme, active consideration is now being given to extending this service to another division.

18 Much as we are willing to give greater variety to the SCService, we have to bear in mind the disadvantages of allowing the SC to be side-tracked into services less relevant to police work. The SC part-time national service was introduced in September 1967 with two broad objectives:-

- (a) to supplement the regular police manpower both during normal day-to-day policing and in emergencies;
- (b) to inculcate in Singapore youths the virtues of civic mindedness and discipline by exposing them to problems of law enforcement.

The role of the SC is primarily one which relates to law enforcement, the maintenance of peace and order. It is therefore necessary to increase the degree of intensity with which the SC NSMen are utilised for crime-fighting duties. The SC cannot be turned into a "Specialist Centre" to provide services without direct bearings on police work. In this context, whatever new roles are to be given to add to the variety of the SC Service, there would naturally be a saturation point. To go beyond this saturation point would mean a departure from the NS objectives of the SC. It remains, therefore, for all NSMen in the SC who are professional men to develop a deeper and greater interest in the police service. Their efforts must be geared to the task of keeping their neighbourhoods crime-free.

19 To the well-educated NSMen in the SC, picking up a new technique and absorbing additional knowledge for their crime fighting duties are a simple matter. Much has therefore to be left to the SC HQ to conduct suitable training at suitable intervals. Apart from the basic training there should be properly planned on-the-job training and in-camp training. By October this year an intensified training programme for SC officers and the men alike will be introduced. It is my hope that the new SC training camp at Jalan Bahar will be sufficiently utilised. The Annual Residential Training should be taken seriously by all concerned.

20 I have to add that the training syllabi of the SC have been reviewed. More emphasis has been placed on the practical aspect of the training. The day-to-day programme will be made more interesting and meaningful, meaningful in the sense that the trainees will not leave the camp empty-minded after the training. Officers having undergone a training will be asked to give a course evaluation. In this way, the entire training system will be kept under constant review.

21 Now you may ask: Since most if not all <sup>of</sup> the better-educated SCs are to be promoted to fill the key positions in the SC, and you have a new training system to train them up, isn't it very obvious that the SC NS officers have taken away a lion's share of the leaders' burden in the SC? Would there then be a responsibility-decentralisation in the SC? The answer is yes and yet no. There is obviously a decentralisation of duties and responsibilities giving the NS officers more responsibilities and the accompanying authorities. This is as it should be. For as officers, they cannot serve merely as passive followers. They must be turned into active leaders. However, the distribution of duties and responsibilities does not lead to an eclipse of duty and responsibility on the part of the regular officers. Firstly, in an all-out effort to fight against crime, more helping hands would mean more chances of success. Secondly, there is now a new system whereby a Divisional Monthly Conference is to be held with the OC Division as Chairman. This monthly conference will provide an opportunity for officers, both regular and NS, to exchange their views on the progress of their crime-fighting service. At the same time, the NS officers will receive a briefing on the general crime trend, so that they may obtain a comprehensive picture on what are happening in the Division.

22 The SC has now become a tightly-knit NS organisation with both regular and NS officers becoming more keenly alive to their duties. Steps have been taken to ensure that administrative instructions are passed down in a clear-cut and stream-lined manner. The briefing system has been improved too. As a result of all these, the SC has now become a more effective NS force composed of more enlightened NS officers and men. This is one of the character traits of the new era of the Special Constabulary.