

SINGAPORE TEACHERS' UNION'S CLAIM

Lest there be any misunderstanding of the Singapore Teachers' Union's claim and of the justification of any hasty action that their members may take to precipitate a strike, the Government wishes to clarify the position of the Normal Trained Teachers. It seems that there is a great deal of misunderstanding of the Singapore Education Service (English Schools), the way it operates and the position of the various categories of teachers under the Scheme.

The gist of the Singapore Teachers' Union's claim is that Normal Trained Teachers are outside the Scheme and that they now want entry into the Scheme at a certain salary higher than that fixed in the Scheme of Service. That the Normal Trained Teachers are outside the Scheme is a misrepresentation of fact. Section 5 of the Education Service (English Schools) reads:

"5. Candidates for entry to this Service must be qualified teachers who either:-

- (1) hold a University Degree or equivalent qualification, acceptable to the Public Services Commission and have undergone professional training acceptable to the Public Services Commission; or
- (ii) have successfully completed a full-time course of study covering a period of at least two years at the Singapore Teachers' Training College; or
- (iii) hold the certificate of any other Teachers' Training College acceptable to the Public Services Commission; or
- (iv) hold a Normal Training Certificate and successfully completed a Post-Normal Course of professional training acceptable to the Public Services Commission; or
- (v) being teachers in Government English Schools confirmed in their appointments shall have qualified as Normal Trained Teachers on or before 31st December, 1941; or

(vi) being teachers in Government English Schools confirmed in their appointments shall have qualified as Normal Trained Teachers after 31st December, 1941, and have reached the age of 35 on 1st January, 1950; or

(vii) hold a Normal Training Certificate."

Section 6 of the Scheme provides different salary scales for teachers possessing different qualifications. Normal Trained Teachers qualified under section 5(vii) are on:

\$325-15A-490/B/530-20A-690 (Men)

\$295-12A-415-15A-445/B/460-15A-565 (Women)

and Certificate Teachers are on:

\$365-20A-405-25A-480/B/-530-25A-780 (Men)

\$335-15A-455/B/495-20A-635 (Women).

Section 7(iv) of the Scheme says that Normal Trained Teachers qualified under section 5(vii) will not be eligible for appointment allowances under Schedule A of the Scheme.

It is clear from the Scheme of Service that Normal Trained Teachers are already in the Education Service and that they are on certain salary scales provided for in the Scheme. It will be quite wrong to say that Normal Trained Teachers are not in the Scheme and that they now want entry into the Scheme. The only and one disadvantage of the Normal Trained Teachers under the Scheme has been that they are not eligible for appointment allowances under Schedule A of the Scheme. These allowances are paid to eligible teachers who hold posts of special responsibility such as headmasters, lecturers, inspectors, organisers or specialist teachers, and vary in amount from \$120 to \$ 420 per month. This disability of the Normal Trained Teachers under the Scheme is now being removed and the result will be that Normal Trained Teachers will be eligible for allowances under the Scheme like all other categories of teachers, and they all can rise to the highest posts in the Service through merit.

The fact that the Normal Trained Teachers are already in the Education Service (English Schools) reduces the Singapore Teachers' Union's claim to one of wanting a higher salary. This is quite a different proposition, and a case must be made out to prove that the present salary scale is inadequate. This has not been done. Comparison has been made with Certificated Teachers who are on:

\$365-20A-405-25A-480/B/530-25A-780 (Men)

\$335-15A-455/B/495-20A-635 (Women).

But comparison has not been made of other factors such as the background of the recruitment and the initial treatment meted out to recruits in these two categories. Briefly they are:

- (1) Entry to the Certificate Course is more restricted and selective. Only Grade I and some Grade II candidates are admitted. Trainees receive only a monthly allowance of \$100 during the 2-year period of full-time training. This period of training is not counted as Government service for pension purposes.
- (2) Entry to the Normal Course is not as selective, and Grade III candidates with a "C" in English are admitted. Trainees receive a salary and allowance of about \$220 p.m. and do part-time teaching and training for 3 years. This period of training is counted as Government service for pension purposes.

With this initial advantage, and now with the ineligibility for post allowances removed, the salaries of Normal Trained Teachers compare favourably with all other classes of Government employees with the same or equivalent academic background and qualifications.

The present Education Service Scheme is not as tidy as it should be, and Government is doing all it can to bring about a more efficient and workable scheme as soon as possible. Any claim for an increase in salary at this stage will be resisted in view of the high cost of the administration. The Education bill for 1957 is nearly \$58½ million against a total revenue of nearly \$236,000,000, i.e. nearly 25%, and this bill will continue to rise for many years to come.

It must be emphasised that teachers have a duty to the community and particularly to the children they teach. There is absolutely no justification for any action to precipitate a strike, and Government must warn members of the Singapore Teachers' Union that the public will judge any action on the facts presented.

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