

PRESS RELEASE

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TEXT OF THE SPEECH GIVEN BY CHAIRMAN  
OF THE METRICATION BOARD, MR. BAEY LIAN PECK,  
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SEMINAR ON METRICATION  
(16TH NOVEMBER, 1971 AT VICTORIA THEATRE)

It is a very great pleasure to me, not only to note the interest that is being displayed in this seminar, but to welcome those, who have responded to the invitations issued by the Metrication Board, to attend some or all of these sessions. For it is the task of the Board to see that information on metrication is disseminated as widely as possible and a gathering of this nature will be an invaluable contribution to this objective. The Board is entrusted with implementing the policy of the Government in metricating Singapore's economy. In view of the publicity being given to this subject, I do not need to enter into detail except, perhaps, to remind you that although metrication will be a process of uncertain duration, there is a target date of 1975 for the complete metrication of the public sector. This will almost automatically mean that a large proportion of industry - it is hoped up to 75 per cent of those involved in export - will have by then also converted to metric.

This task should not prove as difficult in Singapore, where industry is grouped within the confines of our tight little island, as, for instance, in the United Kingdom and Australia, where problems of co-ordination and control are much more complicated. We are, moreover, dealing with a population which responds well to group education once they have been persuaded of its logic. That we have a disciplined society has been exemplified many times in the past as witness the Keep Singapore Clean and Mosquito Free Campaign, the success of the appeal to keep down water consumption, the anti-pollution persuasion we have just completed.

To my way of thinking, these are pointers to the ultimate acceptance by the average Singaporean of the changes which will someday come upon him. Meanwhile, the trial is being blazed by the Government Departments who have already converted or are in process of doing so - by the professions, by commerce and industry, by educationalists, who are getting into their stride and who are represented at this seminar.

I am confident that as a result of the next three days of talks and discussion, the benefits of

the metric change will become increasingly evident, and that such obstacles as there may appear to be in prospect will prove to be less intractable than some of you may believe them to be. We are by no means pioneers in deciding to abandon well-established systems of weights and measures to embark on a major economic exercise that is going to take years to complete and perhaps a generation to become fully absorbed by the masses as a whole. A good beginning has been made and the speakers you are going to hear will be able to tell you along what lines we are progressing towards that ultimate goal. As I say, we are not pioneers and we can surely accomplish without too much difficulty what many other nations have done before us. The changeover is gathering momentum and there is no doubt that this seminar, the first of its kind to be arranged jointly by the Singapore Metrication Board, and the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Singapore, will accelerate that process.

Singapore Metrication Board  
15th November, 1971.

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