

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICITY DIVISION · MINISTRY OF CULTURE · CITY HALL SINGAPORE 6

National Archives and
Records Centre, Singapore.

16 DEC 1978

MC/DEC/15/78 (Social Affairs)

Acc. No. NARC

78	0060	57
----	------	----

SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, MINISTER IN CHARGE OF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING AND CHAIRMAN OF INDUSTRIAL TRAINING BOARD AT THE PRIZE-GIVING CEREMONY OF THE TOP OF THE TRADE 1978 COMPETITIONS AT 9.00 AM ON 9 DEC 78 AT THE PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD AUDITORIUM

Before the Top of the Trade Competitions were launched last year it would have surprised many people to think that this type of competition could make good television-viewing material. Yet the programmes on these competitions, now only in their second year, have established themselves as one of the most popular locally-produced series.

The first year's competitions in fact attracted interest from as far away as Australia. We were most happy to accede to a request from the Minister of Labour and Industry of South Australia for information on organising such competitions and the loan of a video-cassette on one of the competitions. This video-cassette was subsequently viewed by the members of the South Australian Industrial Training Council who were considering the possibility of mounting a similar type of competition there.

For this enjoyable and imaginative series of programmes we have to thank the Science Council and RTS, not to mention the many advisers and judges who have lent their guidance and expert knowledge to make it all possible. I look forward to this being an annual series of competitions.

But apart from its entertainment value, we in the ITB welcomed this opportunity to show what our trainees could do. Most parents with children in their teens grew up in an educational and social environment stressing academic attainments and white-collar work. To them the emerging importance of technical education and training over the years and the growing choice of opportunities for technical

careers now open to their children may perhaps be difficult to grasp. For them, the types of technical courses and trade certification that we have today are things outside their experience.

Since the announcement of the Revised Secondary Education System (RSES) last year, the Ministry of Education, Adult Education Board (AEB) and ITB have been through a period of intensive preparation for the channelling of the less academically-inclined pupils to the vocational stream that will be implemented from next year.

Besides the review and setting of academic standards and training syllabuses, the preparations included the conducting of seminars and workshops to ensure that the staff of all the three bodies involved understood the rationale and implications of the RSES. Before the actual channelling, the guidance counsellors in the schools in turn met parents of pupils who were likely to be affected, to explain and counsel. The ITB opened its doors to the public to view its training operations on Open House Days at all its institutes. Many AEB and ITB officers also gave talks over radio and in schools on vocational and industrial training and career opportunities available. All this was done to help the parents and pupils understand and accept positively the chance offered under the RSES to make good in the vocational stream.

This series of Top of the Trade Competitions television programmes has lent excellent support to our combined efforts to explain to the public about industrial training. The boys and girls from the ITB and EDB training establishments have through their performance and enthusiasm convincingly conveyed the message that we have been trying to put across - that learning a skill can be interesting, challenging and satisfying, that the trainees are as competent and capable in their own area as pupils in school may be in academic studies, and that the trainees have the advantage of acquiring a skill on which they can base their future career.

The AEB and ITB will soon be enrolling their first batch of trainees under the RSES. The applications are in the final stage of processing. Every pupil who was channelled to the vocational stream is assured of a place. But certain courses are more popular than others and while each pupil was offered a reasonable number of choices

as to courses and institutes to enrol in, it is not humanly possible to satisfy every preference. I would therefore like to urge the parents of the pupils who have been channelled to help their children accept the course they will soon be offered, even if it may not be their first or second choice. Our industries need all these skills and the trainee who is willing to work hard should be able to carve out a satisfying career for himself.

I would now like to congratulate the winners of these Top of the Trade Competitions, as well as all the others who so gamely took part, for their very creditable performance. I hope that for all of you this has been a worthwhile experience and that through your participation you too now have a better idea of the possibilities open to you in the skilled trade you have chosen.
