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SPEECH BY MR CHAI CHONG YII, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE
FOR EDUCATION, AT THE 13TH ANNUAL DINNER OF THE SCIENCE TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION AT HOTEL EQUATORIAL ON 21 APRIL 1979 AT 8.00 PM

Tonight is a special occasion for celebration. So many of our Science teachers are here to commemorate the 13th anniversary of the Science Teachers Association of Singapore. It is indeed a pleasure to have this opportunity to address you.

Last month, we had a big debate in Parliament on our Education system. After four days of meeting, a new course has been charted. A new direction with new emphasis is set for our Education system. So far as Science teachers are concerned, the major implications are:-

- (i) First three years of primary school will concentrate on language learning. This means that very little or no Science at all will be taught at the lower primary.
- (ii) Greater emphasis will be placed on moral education. This means that our Science teachers are expected to be more than teachers of scientific concepts and facts. They are to double up as mentors of correct moral values and to set good examples for pupils to follow.

The revised Education system will be implemented slowly as from next year. This is what it should be as a lot of implementation details must first be worked out.

As Science teachers, I am sure you are very conversant with the good points as well as the defects of the existing science curricula and textbooks. With the proposed emphasis on language

learning at /2.

learning at the lower primary, new science curricula have to be decided and textbooks produced. It is therefore a golden opportunity for you to present your views either individually or collectively through your Association. Your teaching experience in respect of language levels, scientific terms and general contents of existing textbooks will be of great help to Curriculum Officers and Textbook Writers. You must not miss this opportunity.

In the modern world of specialisation, all of us tend to be very narrow-minded, placing too much importance on our field of specialization. Each person tries to broaden his scope of influence. Curriculum Officers and Textbook Writers are specialists. They are good in their fields, but they may not have the actual experience of teaching what they write for teachers in schools. Their understanding of the difficulties and frustration faced by teachers in trying to complete the syllabus may be superficial and remote. You are Science teachers having many years of personal experience. Why don't you form yourselves into small working groups, each looking into one particular aspect of science teaching in schools and come up with some concrete suggestions for incorporation in the writing and production of new textbooks for the coming years. If you accept this invitation, you are helping the Ministry as well as helping yourselves. The end result is that we will have happier teachers and pupils in our schools. Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish you all many more years of a happy teaching career.

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