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SPEECH BY MR. CHIN HARN TCNG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,  
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE OPENING OF  
THE SPECIAL CONSTABULARY SEMINAR ON "ROLE OF THE SC IN  
COMMUNITY SERVICE" AT THE RELC AUDITORIUM ON SATURDAY,  
8 JULY 1978 AT 3.00 P.M.

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Over the past two decades, many changes have taken place in Singapore. Politically, there is a stable government which commands the support of the vast majority of the populace. Economically, the industrialization programme that has been fostered by the Government has yielded in present times a creditable annual growth rate. Socially, with increasing numbers in population and of the working force, the physical environment has altered - more high-rise apartments and buildings, more recreational facilities and opportunities. At a community level, the existence of community centres, citizens' consultative committees and the like, has generated social awareness and community spirit. All these factors interact to make what Singapore is today.

However, together with progress comes many attendant problems. There are many social problems which require more attention and participation in social development and community service. I am pleased to note that the Special Constabulary has decided to reappraise its role in community service by holding this Seminar. The SCNS has a special role to play in developing Singapore into a better place to live. I hope this Seminar will eradicate the negative-thinking elements among the SCNS. There are some in the SCNS who regard their stint of National Service as a chore and a compulsory obligation which they have to discharge. Their attitude is simply one of wishing to get over and be done with this duty as soon as possible. They therefore have failed to understand their role in the Singapore society of today, and are selfish in not wanting to contribute to the development of a better society.

The SCNS should not be viewed simply as a law enforcement unit. Its function is not only to enforce the law but also to

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promote among the people a law-abiding habit. The people are more likely to obey laws when they know laws are made to protect and not to inconvenience them. What I am saying is: when you have to enforce the law you don't have to do it in an unnecessary rude or arrogant manner. Where there is an element of discretion being involved, use it wisely to create friendliness, and in this manner, persuasion is a better deterrent to certain problems. On a collective basis, there are many social problems which as a group the SCNS is in a very special position to tackle, e.g. drug addiction, the problems of the aged and other needy groups, etc. In this way, the SCNS can be a positive influence in community action.

I believe that all sectors in Singapore society are important and exert mutual influences for good or for bad. The SCNS is one such sector, and because it is an organization which is disciplined and closely-knit, it has a special task in generating new thinking and new plans of action for community development. It has much to contribute to developing Singapore socially.

To sum up what I have said, and for the purposes of this Seminar, I would like to propose the following as a framework for your deliberations:-

- (1) It is imperative in your discussion to be clear as to what the social objectives of community service involve; in other words, it is necessary to identify the general objectives.
- (2) Having established the general aims, it is important to identify specific social problems which you as a group encounter and can perhaps solve.
- (3) To explore ways in which to implement plans of action for the specific problems or objectives, and
- (4) It is prudent to be realistic and is better to aim for less and achieve it than to be ambitious and to achieve nothing at all; in other words, be practical.

By your deliberations, I am sure you will focus attention on the problems which you are all aware of, and by your participation here at the Seminar, you have all demonstrated social awareness which is a necessary pre-requisite to nation-building. I am confident that the outcome of this Seminar will be a positive one, and I therefore take great pleasure in declaring this Seminar open.