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Opening address by Inche Hussein Onn,  
Minister of Education, at the Seminar  
on "Education for Citizenship" organised  
by MASOBA on 4th September 1971, at 10.30 a.m.

Inche Peter Chua, Pengerusi Pengelola,  
Tuan2 dan Puan2 hadzirin

Saya mengucapkan berbanyak terima kaseh  
kapada "The Education Committee of the Kuala Lumpur  
methodist Afternoon School Old Boys Association"  
kerana kehormatan yang di-beri kapada saya membuka  
Seminar ini.

Thema Seminar ini ia-lah "Education for  
Citizenship" dan bagaimana yang di-terangkan oleh  
pehak pengelola seminar ini, tujuan-nya ada-lah  
"to focus the attention of both the members of  
the Association and also the public on the vital topic  
of "Citizenship Education".

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. Looking at the list of working papers  
which will be presented and discussed at this  
seminar, I feel sure that this seminar will not  
only be an interesting but also a beneficial and  
constructive one. The working papers which will

be presented for discussion are on:

- (i) "Education for Citizenship".
- (ii) "Freedom and Authority in the University", which subject has lately become quite prominent, especially among our university students.
- (iii) "The place of Civics in our school curriculum".
- (iv) "Our citizens and the Rukunegara".
- (v) "Higher Education in Malaysia to-day".
- (vi) "Youth and Politics".

The subjects of these working papers are well-chosen, pertinent and relevant to the theme of the seminar.

3. As I am comparatively young, I am apt to be referred to as a damn politician, especially by those who do not agree with my views and actions. As I grow older, I will, perhaps, be referred to reverently as a statesman, by those who agree with me, and to those who still disagree with me, I will still be known not only as a damn politician but an incorrigible one as well.

Generally speaking, politicians pride themselves in having some political wisdom which consists ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> anticipating events, forestalling them and averting them whenever possible. It is said that a political Minister is paid for his political experience and understanding of the public.

4. I am reputed to be a serious man, both in my work and in my looks. After a recent incident, I must now be careful in what I say and how I say it. Thus what I have said just now about myself and politicians should only be taken seriously or otherwise according to circumstances. Should there be any similarity between the description of myself and other politicians, they are purely coincidental.

5. Now coming back to the seminar, and speaking seriously, it has been said that "the ultimate goals of education are human happiness and the welfare of society. It's products are good men and women, and good citizens". The next generation of our citizens is being shaped by our schools, colleges and universities to-day.

6. We all have some voice in the Government of our country, and one of the most important of our duties as citizens, is to fit ourselves for that great responsibility. This requires study and thought as well as good-will.

Our nation consists of people of diverse racial origins, of diverse ancient religions and of diverse ancient cultures. Questions arise, and will continue to arise, which require tact, moderation, and forbearance on all parts. Our leaders must know when to give way, and where to stand firm, and our citizens must know whom to support. We often, unfortunately, regard others as enemies. And yet a clearer light shows that we are human, and ought to be friends.

7. It is sometimes said that revolutions are not made with rose-water. Greater changes, however, have been made in the constitution of the world by argument than by arms, by evolution rather than by revolution; and even where arms have been used, in most cases the pen has wielded the sword. Ideas are more powerful than bayonets.

8. As citizens, we should think more of performing our duties and shouldering our responsibilities than of claiming our rights. Our nation will only be great, our nation will only be truly united, our nation will only live in peace, harmony and prosperity, if its citizens are fully conscious of their duties and responsibilities. To work then for our country at whatever cost, or risk, is a solemn duty, and he is not worthy to live at all, who for fear of work or inconvenience or danger or death, shuns his country's service or his own honour, since death is inevitable, and the fame of virtue immortal.

9. Those of our fellow-citizens who have little or have none at all, must be helped and up-lifted. Those who have, must be prepared and willing to come forward to give and to assist. To help others is no easy matter, but requires a clear head and a wise judgment, as well as a warm heart.

10. We are a young nation and above all else, we require and need leaders — leaders in all fields — in politic, trade, commerce, industry, education, in the various professions, civil service, religion, etc.

We also require and need leaders at all levels - national, state, in the urban areas and more so in the rural areas.

11. As to political leadership, what qualities should we look for in a political leader? The qualities are much the same now as they have always been. They are:-

- (i) He must be interested primarily in the good of the community rather than in his own advancement.
- (ii) He must have sound practical judgment and whatever special skill and knowledge is required for the particular task.
- (iii) He must have decisiveness and the courage to take the risk of being wrong or becoming unpopular.
- (iv) And, above all, he must have the ability to inspire trust and confidence.

One of the main obstacles to good political leadership is the reluctance of the best men to assume the burdens of public office.

12. National unity is the over-riding objective of our country. The Second Malaysia Plan places greater emphasis on social integration and more equitable distribution of income and opportunities for national unity and progress. The Plan incorporates a two-pronged policy for development. The first prong is to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, by raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians, irrespective of race. The second prong aims at accelerating the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalance, so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function.

13. Every citizen of our country, young and old, has a part to play. The young should concentrate on their studies and make full use of the many facilities provided so that they will be qualified and trained to contribute and play their part later in the development of our country. The old must have faith in our nation's destiny and the ultimate achievement of national unity. We are confident that our citizens will rise to the call as they have done so many times

before. We know that among our citizens, they are more who have the interests and well-being of our nation and country in their hearts than those whose ideological allegiance are elsewhere.

14. I have said earlier that the next generation of our citizens is being shaped by our schools, colleges and universities to-day. The Education Ministry is fully conscious of this responsibility. It has spared no efforts, and never will, in discharging this responsibility. But the responsibility of producing educated, intelligent, disciplined and useful future citizens is not that of the Education Ministry alone. It is equally the responsibility of the teachers, parents and our society as a whole.

15. It is clear that education to be effective, must take into account pupil perceptions, pupil needs and pupil aspirations. Learning, to be truly effective, can be facilitated if feed-back is obtained of pupil problems and aspirations. The curriculum therefore needs to be reviewed and up dated to be pupil-centred, and for this purpose a Curriculum Development Centre is required to ensure that education does not produce

merely literate human beings but youths who are well equipped for citizenship. The Ministry of Education will shortly be establishing a Curriculum Development Centre, which will not only take into account what and how much should be taught, but also pupil perceptions, needs, problems, and aspirations.

16. What, it may be asked, are the components available in the educational system which are geared towards citizenship building? Can we satisfy the criteria of effective education that our youth are being adequately prepared for their future roles of adults and citizens? The infra-structure certainly exists which is conducive to the achievement of these twin goals.

17. The array of subjects in the curriculum, whether arts, science, or technical, are taught not merely for the acquisition of facts, information and knowledge. Their relevance in day-to-day adult life cannot be disputed. In keeping with the realities of a society in transition, appropriate stress has and is being given to Science education on the one hand and Civics education on the other. The importance attached to the teaching of these subjects is consistent with the principles of Rukunegara -

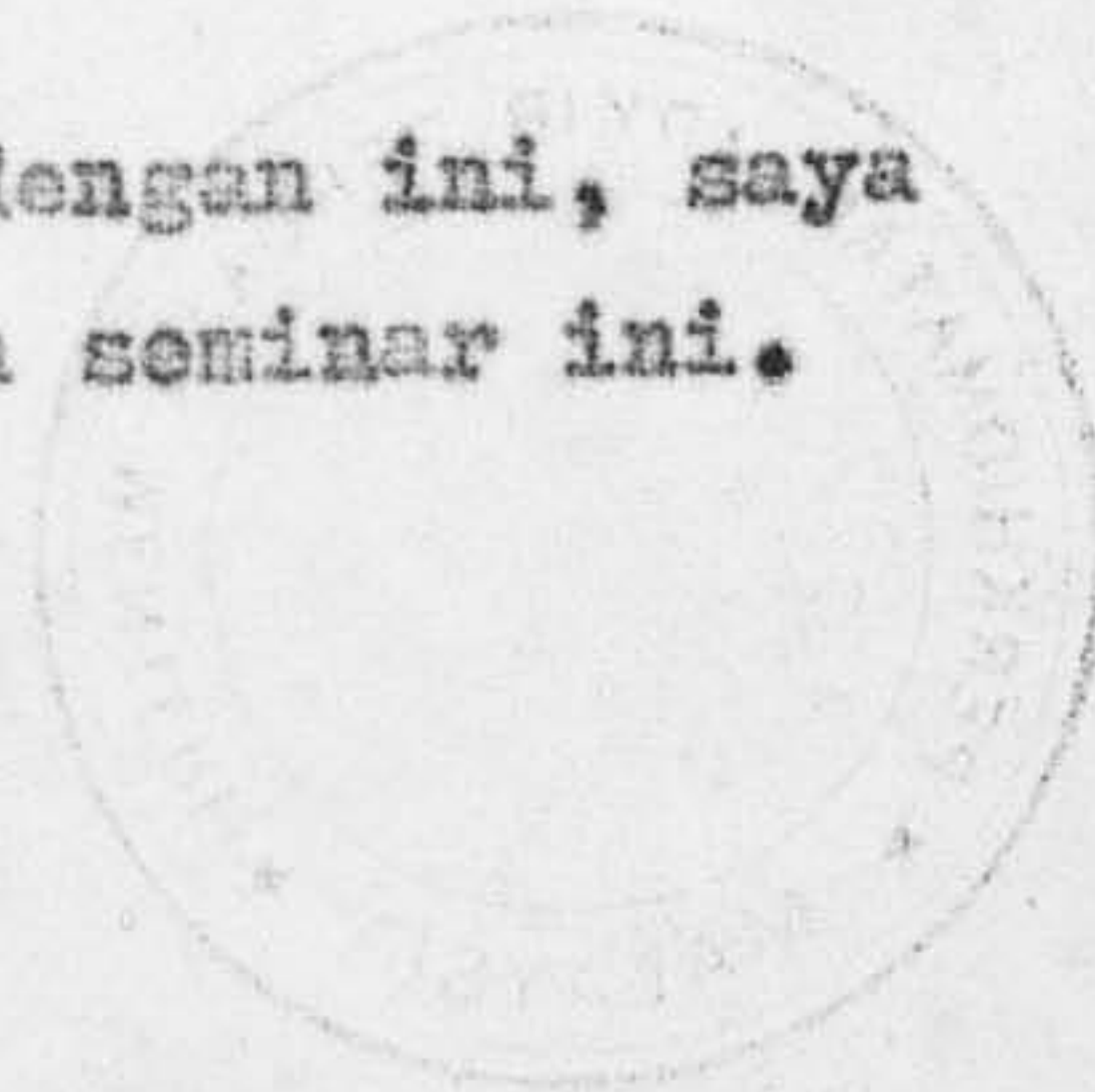
that is, maintaining a democratic way of life and building a progressive society which will keep in step with scientific and technological advancement while developing spiritual values.

18. The existence of educational institutions, and avenues of training alone, cannot ensure the development of manpower according to the needs of the nation. To help youth in their development towards adulthood, it is necessary that they be helped in decision-making, in sorting out their problems, in choosing educational and training escalators leading to the world of work, and attainment of status as a productive member of society. This, in my view, is the true symbol of adulthood, and it is for this reason that we have established Guidance Services in schools. Whilst Guidance Services cannot be regarded as a panacea for all ills and needs of adolescents, it undoubtedly can help the individual assess his strength and weaknesses, his interests, abilities and potential, and crystallise the sum total into career choice, and thus make his mark as a responsible and useful adult. Education and Guidance is thus attuned to the preparation of youth for adulthood.

19. Clearly one cannot be complacent about what has been achieved in the area of education for citizenship. It may well be asked whether other kinds of activities cannot be encouraged to reinforce the unifying common cultural elements. A start has already been made by according to youth the concern and support they deserve. A seminar such as this, is yet another proof of our commitment to ensure the emergence of future generations of Malaysians, who will be responsible, dynamic and dedicated to nation-building.

20. The relationship between education and citizenship has always interested me greatly. I will therefore follow your deliberations closely and will give due weight to any recommendations that you may make.

21. Tuan2 dan puan2 sakalian, dengan ini, saya dengan amat sukachita-nya, membuka seminar ini.



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Yours and yours excellent,  
 Hassan Ali Mahidin



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