

SPEECHES AT THE OPENING CEREMONY

Speech by Dr The Hon. S.Y. Chung,
Senior Unofficial Member of Legislative Council

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to welcome the distinguished overseas delegates to Hong Kong. For those of you who are visiting Hong Kong for the first time, I am sure you will have a unique experience which you will pleasantly remember for a long time. For those of you who have been here before, I am sure you will welcome the opportunity to renew your acquaintance and happy memories.

One of the major world problems today is the development gap between the advanced countries and the developing nations. Take for an example the developing countries of Asia; these emerging nations contain almost one-third of the world population but it is reported that their share of the world's industrial output is less than 4 percent. Such unfavourable comparisons equally apply to those developing countries in Africa and Latin America.

Taking another common yardstick to express the economic gulf between the industrially-developed and the less-developed countries, the average yearly per capita national income of North America reaches as high as US \$5,000 and of the European Economic Community about US \$3,500. In contrast, the average per capita income of the developing nations in Asia barely exceeds US \$250. In fact, many of the developing countries in Asia have a per capita income as low as US \$100 to US \$150.

The widening economic gap between the rich and poor nations has been and is still causing growing concern, particularly in the context of the so-called "North-South" problem. The ancestors of the people in these developing nations were to some extent unaware of the high material standards of the economically-developed countries and were therefore prepared to accept what they had, despite how little that was. With the tremendous improvement in world communication and transportation in recent decades, the peoples of these developing economies are no longer isolated from other parts of the world nor are they ignorant of the affluence in the developed countries.

Rightly or wrongly, the peoples of the emerging economies expect a better share of the world's material wealth. It is generally recognised that unless this economic gap is narrowed, there would be growing discontent among the peoples in the less developed countries and if this is allowed to continue without correction it could lead to global violence.

One of the major causes of the developmental gap between the advanced and the developing countries is widely believed to lie in the disparity in the levels of science and technology between these two groups of countries. The United Nations has conducted much research in this area and, as a result, the strategy in the UN Second Development Decade for the industrializing countries attaches great importance to the role of science and technology and stresses the urgent need for acceleration in technology transfer and in self-reliance.

For successful transfer of technology and to narrow the technological gap the recipient country must have the capacity and capability to accept the technology transfer. To elaborate on this point: even if a developing country is provided with sufficient funds to procure industrial plants from an advanced country and given sufficient markets for its products, the developing country will not succeed in its industrialization unless it has the technological capability not only to operate and manage these purchased plants but also to improve upon them from time to time so as to bring the technical standards of the plants up-to-date as time goes on. Hence, unless the recipient country has the technical manpower, both in appropriate quality and adequate quantity, it is difficult to successfully implement the technology transfer and industrialization. For this reason, the development of technical education and industrial training is of paramount importance in the industrializing nations.

Turning to the domestic scene, for over a hundred years and until the early 1950s, Hong Kong has been living on entrepot trade. It was only 20 years ago, as a result of changed circumstances beyond our control, that Hong Kong lost its traditional source of income and had to shift its economic dependence to the manufacturing industry as its arable land was so limited. Furthermore, because Hong Kong had no natural material resources and was, at that time, in need of many employment opportunities for its inflated population, its manufacturing industry had to be import-oriented material-wise, export-oriented productwise, and labour-intensive. From very little beginnings Hong Kong is now known throughout the world as a centre of manufacturing for light consumer and engineering products.

The success of Hong's industry is reflected in rising wages and salaries. Today, Hong Kong's industrial wages are the highest in Asia after Japan and Hong Kong's professional salaries are even among the highest in the world. Coupled with high cost of land and building construction, Hong Kong is no longer a low-cost territory as it used to be 10 or 15 years ago.

Resulting from these changed and still changing circumstances, Hong Kong's manufacturing industry cannot continue to compete with other low-cost territories in price in world markets. Hong Kong is aware of this situation. However, since Hong Kong's economic survival depends on its exports, Hong Kong has no alternative but to find ways and means to maintain its competitive position in the export market. It is therefore obvious that Hong Kong must improve its industrial productivity through mechanization of its existing industries as well as develop more sophisticated and technologically advanced industries. Hong Kong has to follow the foot-steps of the industrially-advanced countries whose industries, faced with severe competition from low-cost territories, have to compete not in price but on quality and technology. For this reason, the development of technical education and industrial training in Hong Kong is of great importance to our future well-being.

Only seven years ago, technical education for a population of four million people in Hong Kong was limited to one of the two universities and the then Hong Kong Technical College. The total number of places for full-time technical education was less than 2,000 - 500 at the University of Hong Kong and 1,400 at the Technical College.

Realising the urgent need to significantly expand technical education, the Hong Kong Government has in recent years made great strides. The first Technical Institute, designed primarily for technicians and craftsmen, was opened in 1969 at Morrison Hill. It can accommodate about 1,400 full-time equivalent students. Since then two more such Technical Institutes have been built in Kowloon and the fourth one is scheduled to commence operation in 1977. At the University of Hong Kong, a new department of industrial engineering was established in 1973 and the total enrolment in the faculty of engineering and architecture has increased to over 800.

The greatest expansion in technical education in Hong Kong occurred with the establishment of the Hong Kong Polytechnic which was converted from the Technical College in 1972 for the training of technologists, professional engineers and high level technicians. The ambitious Polytechnic development programme calls for an increase to 8,000 full-time equivalent places and to 20,000 part-time evening places by 1978.

Both the Government and industry recognise that there is increasing demand for technical education and that there was and still is a lack of training facilities and technical education opportunities in Hong Kong. Therefore despite Hong Kong's financial stringency in the last two years, the Government has continued to divert substantial public funds toward the great expansion of technical education. By the end of this decade, Hong Kong should be able to provide sufficient technical education facilities for a total enrolment of 50,000 places for full-time, part-time day and evening students. In order to put this number of 50,000 places into proper perspective, it will be equivalent to 1% of the total population in Hong Kong, or $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the working population or 5% of the manpower employed in the industrial sector.

We in Hong Kong also realise that technical education without industrial training is just like a half-baked potato. Since 1970 some efforts have been made in promoting industrial training and a bill on industrial training was enacted this year. Efforts are also being made jointly by the Government and industry to establish training centres for different trades. Two such training centres, one for clothing and the other for the construction industry, are being set up.

As we in Hong Kong are in the midst of a vast expansion of our facilities for technical education and industrial training, we specially welcome the opportunity of hosting this Commonwealth Regional Seminar on Technical Education and Industry. Through the exchange of knowledge and experience, Hong Kong will certainly benefit from this Seminar.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it now remains for me to wish you all every success in the deliberations at your Seminar and a very pleasant and interesting stay in Hong Kong.

Speech by Mr B.F.C. Fong, Assistant Director,
Education Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Mr Chairman, your Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like first to express our grateful thanks to Dr Chung for honouring us by opening this seminar. As one who combines academic distinction with a leading role in the industrial life of this great city, Dr Chung is a shining example that education and industry are not necessarily worlds apart, and that, in Hong Kong, one is enriched by the other. I should like to thank him also for drawing our attention to the critical needs of developing countries for industrial skills to achieve developmental goals and for self-reliance. The plight of Third World countries suffering from a deficiency of technical expertise is well known to you; I therefore need not dwell further on this point, and bother you with facts and figures.

Next, I should like to extend a very warm welcome to all delegates, observers, and the guests present, on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Shridath Ramphal, and to convey his greetings to you. As you perhaps already know, Mr Ramphal is here in Hong Kong to officiate at the Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers. Understandably he is unable to be with us this morning, but hopes to meet you before we disperse. I may add that Mr Ramphal has a keen personal interest in the subject of education and training as he himself comes from a developing country, Guyana. Besides that, he looks upon industrial training as an essential component of Commonwealth co-operation in industrial development in pursuance of the New International Economic Order; and Commonwealth Heads of Government have attached high priority to this as a means of diminishing the gap between the rich and poor nations.

I also wish to express the Secretary-General's gratitude to the Hong Kong Government and to the Education Department in particular for their kind offer to host this seminar and generosity in putting its resources at our disposal, and also to the Polytechnic for its contributions. Excellent arrangements have also been made for our physical comfort and to cater for our professional and cultural interests. For all of us, particularly for those who are here for the first time, the magnificent buildings of Hong Kong, its major engineering installations, its bustling commerce and industry and its dynamic educational institutions will provide inspiration for our work over the next two weeks.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Division is responsible for the initial planning and organizing of this seminar. You may be interested to know in passing that the Division's history goes back to some 16 years ago when it began in the form of a Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit. That Unit was set up on the recommendation of the first Commonwealth Education Conference held in Oxford in 1959. The high priority given to technical education and industrial training is shown by the decision to hold one of the first Commonwealth Specialist Conference in the area of technician training. This was the Conference on the Education and Training of Technicians held in Huddersfield, England, in 1966. It gives us great pleasure to see that we have with us at this seminar at least three people who were present at that conference. One of them was Dr Chandrakant, who is presenting one of the lead papers for this seminar. At Huddersfield, Hong Kong was then represented by Mr C.T. Kell, Assistant Director (Further and Technical Education) and Mr S.Z. Sung, Principal of the then Technical College.

It may be recalled that at that specialist conference the host was Mr Alexander MacLennan, then Principal of the Huddersfield College of Education (Technical). Most of us recognise Mr MacLennan's immense contribution to technical education in the Commonwealth. We commissioned his book "Educating and Training Technicians" in order to develop and update the thinking of the 1966 Huddersfield Conference, and published it quite recently. We have sent copies to all delegates and a few copies of the conference report itself will be made available to delegates for reference during the seminar.

We cannot claim to have done as much in this vital area of education as we should have liked. Our activities can only be as extensive as our resources permit and were, initially, confined to studies of facilities available in industry for practical training. But the establishment of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation in 1971 added a new dimension to the activities of the Secretariat; and much of the movement between developing countries of the Commonwealth for technical training has been sponsored by the Fund's Education and Training Programme. It seems therefore natural that, at this seminar, we shall explore further how the Fund can assist in promoting a wider exchange of expertise and experiences. Meanwhile, Commonwealth Education Ministers meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1968 and also in Canberra, Australia, in 1971, have strongly urged greater activity in the field of technician training. They will be due to meet again early next year in Accra, Ghana, at the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference. Commonwealth Education Ministers will no doubt be very much interested in not only the report of this seminar but especially the practical actions you will recommend as a result of your deliberations.

We are very conscious in the Secretariat of the immense activities under bilateral and international aid auspices in the area of technical education and industrial training. We shall take into account the efforts of other international organizations such as UNESCO, ILO, and the Colombo Plan in order to avoid wasteful duplication of efforts but more positively to make our contributions where the needs are most urgently felt. In this connection, I have the added pleasure to welcome the representative of ILO, Mr R. Campbell, and Dr Chandrakant, Director of the Colombo Plan Staff College for Technician Education who is also one of our consultants. The other consultant is none other than the eminent Director of your Polytechnic, Dr Keith Legg.

This must bring me to say a few words about the actual content of the seminar. The subject of the seminar is "Technical Education and Industry"; and this is intended to mean the relationships amounting to a partnership that ought to exist between them; the interface between them, to use a fashionable word. But let me add that, while the interface extends through all the strata from the education and training of postgraduates to that of semi-skilled workers, we wish this seminar to place the emphasis on the technician level. Indeed, the emphasis falls there in any case, because it is at the level of technician education and training that co-operation becomes so vitally important that the contributions of industry and the public education system must be absolutely complementary. Moreover there are problems at this level that are more acute than at other levels. In most countries there is a near-crisis shortage of highly skilled men or women. This may be because the possible role of the technician has failed to capture the imagination of employers, or at least to convince them that technicians must be accorded status and salary superior to those enjoyed by craftsmen and little inferior to

those enjoyed by professional engineers and other technologists. The problems at this level were clearly identified by the Huddersfield Conference and by subsequent Commonwealth Education Conferences, and we shall be following their lead if we concentrate on the interface at this level, without, of course, totally neglecting those relationships between education and industry that apply to all levels.

This emphasis on the technician level does not, we sincerely hope, mean that our seminar will be of no interest to the less developed countries of the two regions. It is true, on the evidence of their own country papers, that for some of them the interface between technical education and industry is at present mainly at the trade training and trade apprenticeship level. But in looking forward to the expansion of their facilities upwards into the technician level in the not far distant future, the representatives of these countries will have contributions to make, and will also want to learn of the experiences of their more developed neighbours, and of their successes and failures. Another important point is that these less developed countries in particular may be able to benefit from measures of regional co-operation in technical education and industrial training which are among the questions on which we wish to reach some practical conclusions.

This brings me to my two final points. The first is that when sponsoring education seminars or conferences the Commonwealth Secretariat always tries its best to ensure that practical action will result in some form or other, or preferably in several forms, which will help to solve or ease problematical situations faced by member countries. This means that, at our closing sessions, we shall want to formulate recommendations that are not just pious hopes or expressions of agreement about philosophy, but genuine and realistic proposals for improvements, for example in legislation or in organization or in training methods. We shall need to incorporate these recommendations in our report. We also have in mind the possibility that, if there is enough material, the Commonwealth Secretariat might publish an account of interesting measures, arrangements, innovations, case studies, success stories, whatever delegates think best; this will be for all to decide.

Finally, may I return to the point about regionalism, and say that the Commonwealth Secretariat attaches great importance to supporting co-operative arrangements within a region, if only because the smaller or poorer countries cannot economically set up their own educational or training facilities when only small numbers are required in particular grades or categories. Towards the end of the seminar, we shall be discussing more about regional schemes and programmes which are in operation or being planned, to show the framework within which the seminar can make its own recommendations. Among the literature we have already supplied are copies of papers and reports relating to the Secretariat generally and the education and training programme of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation in particular. Of course, we are not the only people interested in regional action, and we are fortunate to have with us representatives who can tell us more about ILO and the Colombo Plan and their activities and potentialities in the Asian and Pacific regions. The South Pacific Commission and UNESCO have also expressed interest in our seminar and asked to be kept informed. It may be that you will want to direct some of your recommendations to one or more of these agencies. There is also room for pan-Commonwealth thinking and action for exchanges of ideas and people between the regions. That is why we have invited a distinguished representative from an African country to join us here. Dr Ajayi, besides being Principal of the

well-established Ibadan Polytechnic , holds national positions in education and training in Nigeria and has excellent contacts in other African countries. He may well be able to provide links within the African region as well as with other regions .

It only remains for me to wish you an interesting and enjoyable seminar .