97

EMBARGOED FOR PUBLICATION ON 2 AUGUST 96

CHASE THAT RAINBOW -
A SPECIAL YOUTH FORUM WITH THE SENIOR MINISTER

Shaun Seow: "Mr Lee also said if Phua Mei Pin were his daughter, he'll be very sad as he expected 19-year-olds to aspire towards something more uplifting. Well, with us in the studio is Mei Pin. Mei Pin, to start our discussion, could you tell us what reactions have you received to your article and what's your response to what the Senior Minister said?"

Mei Pin: "Well, what struck me most was how many people got into contact with me, people from a wide range of backgrounds and ages, who told me that they felt the same way, either for themselves or for their children, which convinced me that whether this is a sentiment you like to hear or not, it is here and it is real. And first, Senior Minister, I wanted to ask you because you said that you were sad and puzzled. I was hoping you could tell us what is your perception of young people 19-year-olds and do we cause you a lot of heartbreak and disappointment?"

Mr Lee: "Well, I don't think you can assume that all 19-year-olds are like you. I mean, that's the first assumption which I would challenge. / If you look at the profile of each cohort in the last few years, about 18, 19 per cent make it to university. So, you are amongst 18, 19 per cent and other 30-plus per cent make it to the Polytechnics. I don't think their aspirations are the same as yours. And for the 40-odd per cent that made the Institute of Technical Education after "N" levels, I mean, I don't think they are thinking of condos and cars. If they can get a good skill job at the end of four, five years of training and NTC-3 or whatever, they can achieve, that's not doing badly and you've got to remember that the world is not just all like you./

I mean, for instance, let me put it to you like this. You're off soon to university?"

Mei Pin: Yes."

Mr Lee: "What are you going to read?"

Mei Pin: "English Literature."

Mr Lee: "In Harvard?"

Mei Pin: "Yes."

Mr Lee: "On a scholarship?"

Mei Pin: "Yes."

Mr Lee: "Well, let me put it to you this way. If you are going to major in English Literature, what can you do after that in order to earn an income that will buy you a supercondo and a supercar, say, a Mercedes and a Ardmore Park?"

Mei Pin: "Not much."

Mr Lee: "Well, there you are. So, you've got to decide what is it you like to do in life./if all you want is material success and you're good at words, which obviously you must be because otherwise you wouldn't be doing English Literature, then if you'll look at all the professions. You'll see law is where the money is, right? I mean, a good lawyer, top lawyer, you know, makes $2.5 million a year or $2.8 million in 1994.

"So, why do you want to do English Literature? What can you do with English Literature? You can teach. You can work for a newspaper, which you've done sort of on a trial basis. But you ask Patrick Daniel, can he get rich editing a newspaper? If he wants to get rich, he's got to write a blockbuster, right? / Otherwise, money cannot be the result of English Literature. Law could be the result, could bring the result of a condo and a house, maybe landed property. So, obviously, you must have had some career guidance in school, your parents. What's your father doing?"

Mei Pin: "He's a policeman."

Mr Lee: "Well, he's not uneducated. Your mother?"

Mei Pin: "Ah, she's in the Civil Service."

Mr Lee: "That's right. So, she's educated, knowledgeable. They must have advised you and discussed with you what are your options. And if your option was, I want a condo, I want a Mercedes, then you aim for those professions which will bring you those results. But you have chosen English Literature. If you were my daughter -- or my granddaughter really now because my granddaughter is already 15 -- I would tell her, and she also like writing and she's in this whatever tutor programme and she writes little stories, there's no money in it unless you are really good.

Shaun Seow: "We have a lawyer in the midst. Do you have any reactions to what the Senior Minister has just said?"

Harpreet: "Senior Minister, my name is Harpreet. For the record, I don't make anywhere near $2.8 million a year."

Mr Lee: "How old are you?"

Harpreet: "I'm 30, Senior Minister. My concern..."

Mr Lee: "You can't make two-and-a-half because you're only 30. You've got to establish yourself, when you're 45 or 50, you are at your peak then you've got your contacts, then you've established your record. Then the big clients come to you."

Harpreet: "Senior Minister if I could. There's a genuine concern many Singaporeans that leaving aside condo prices, even HDB prices have gone sky-high and property prices over the last 5 years since they escalated sharply./ I wonder Senior Minister if your view is that the Government should have taken any steps earlier to check on speculation and if not then, what special facts Senior Minister existed in 1996 to justify these measures but not any earlier?"

Mr Lee: /I just haven't watched the property prices but if you ask me if these measures had been introduced a year earlier I think the end result of today's prices will still be the same but the speculative frenzy the froth would have been wiped off.

"Let me, you may find this difficult to believe but let me explain briefly why I believe that. If you look at the way prices have moved, you will see that there is almost 95 to 100 per cent correlation with the way our incomes have moved. So, it's not foreigners and speculation that's pushed property prices up. It is because we have become richer as a people, not just a few at the top but everybody across-the-board. I mean you can see it from the CPF figures, what were the factory workers earning five years ago, ten years ago as what he's earning today. What are the other professionals earning at the top end? We have been growing at eight, nine, ten per cent per annum which means every year starting say from 1990 we were about 70 or 80 billion, 70 something billion GDP. We've been moving up at seven, ten per cent of 70 is seven and next year ten per cent of 78 becomes eight billion until now we are around 120 billion and we'll become 130 by the end of this year. Of that money if you look at the total distribution of it, 40 and a half per cent goes in wages. Some are of course with foreigners and with work permit holders were also foreigners but 42 per cent of $130 billion is a lot of dollars. It's about $60 billion in the economy. So, you must remember that supposing we have ten apples there and we each have ten cents and all of us want that apple, we'll end up by splitting that apple. There are 24 of you, three of us 27, we'll each have ten divided by 27 because we have all got the same purchasing power.

"So, you cannot measure across time zones. You have to measure your income when you're talking of a fixed quantity. Now apples are easy. You say short of apples, we import more from Australia, California, Japan, whatever, so you have more apples. So, there's a world price but land you can't import. /Every city faces the same problem, however big you are. You may be huge like Australia or like the US. Finally you are living in a city. And if you look at London, you look at New York, you look at Tokyo, you see cities undergo a change. The same piece of land begins to yield more and more housing units, more and more office space because your infrastructure, roads, sewers, power electricity, underground railways have got to serve that same area and building technology changes and the value of land goes up in the city not in the countryside as much because more intensive use is made of the city. So you see this en bloc redevelopment, selective en bloc, SER, whatever they call it, built 15, 20 years ago, some 30 years ago, low plot ratio, they buy everybody out, rebuild, give everybody full compensation, plus the opportunity to buy back and go back to the same place. More units. But remember you can't say I want to buy at the price my father bought it. Your father competed against his generation and that was a lot of land available.

"Look/I would not allow your whole horizon to be conscribed by this awful spectre of astronomical land prices and therefore flooding you out or squeezing you out. There'll be ups and downs every commodity including land goes through cycles./"

Patrick Daniel: "Can I just ask. How many of you concerned about property? I mean, is this a common concern? Can you just say by show of hands? Who's not concerned? At least there are some."

Mr Lee: "Who are all concerned that you will not be able to afford a house either HDB or private? No."

Patrick Daniel: "Sir, you are concerned?"

Lester: "Yeah, I'm quite concerned.."

Mr Lee: "About?"

Lester: "About owning a HDB in the future."

Mr Lee: "HDB."

Lester: "Yeah."

Mr Lee: "That you may not be able to afford one?"

Lester: Yeah."

Mr Lee: "Well, let me get this right. That means you have a very pessimistic view of what will happen to Singapore?"

Lester: "No. My name is Lester. I'm from Temasek Polytechnic. I'm 19 and I'm one of those average 19-year-olds. I am not pessimistic."

Mr Lee: "No. All right, you're 19 and what is your ambition. What kind of home do you want to, you hope to get?"

Lester: "Well, hopefully a roof over my head first for a start but basically a simple nice flat, 4-room, if I can upgrade to a private estate, why not?"

Mr Lee: "You will look for a 4-room HDB first."

Lester: "Yeah."

Mr Lee: "Your first buy?"

Lester: "Correct or bigger."

Mr Lee: "Sorry."

Lester: "Or bigger."

Mr Lee: "Or bigger."

Lester: "Something which you can..."

Mr Lee: "Or bigger means what? Five room or executive?"

Lester: "Five room executive, yeah."

Mr Lee: "Sorry."

Lester: "Five room or exec or you know something."

Mr Lee: "No, no, five-room, five-room executives are two different types."

Lester: "Okay, let's start with the four-room flat first."

Mr Lee: "That's good. Then, then you want to go into a condo?"

Lester: "Yeah and slowly upgrade myself as I will.."

Mr Lee: "When do you hope to get your condo?"

Lester: "Well, that's quite a very.."

Mr Lee: "You're not sure yet."

Lester: "No, I'm not..."

Mr Lee: "Well, that's good because you got to know what kind of job you're going to have right?"

Lester: "Yeah."

Mr Lee: "But let me ask you why are you worried you can't afford a four-room flat."

Lester: "As what Harpreet has said I think property prices now are going up if the economy keeps on doing well, I'm sure it will do well and if everything goes up, I'm sure property prices as well will go up and hopefully income goes up."

Mr Lee: "But then if incomes don't go up how can they go up property prices? Income goes up and then because there's more money, property prices go up."

Lester: "You said that as demand increases.."

Mr Lee: "That's right."

Lester: "Demand increases supply when there's demand right supply would decrease and so prices would get more expensive, right. Where I'm concerned not because what can I afford, I'm concerned because how competitive it will be. I'm concerned we will be a generation that will be queuing up for this HDB. Basically landed property is out of my sight right now that's beyond my reach so to speak."

Mr Lee: "No you are worried you have to queue up for your four-room flat."

Lester: "No, there's no point in queuing up. No worries about queuing but there's a worry of getting the actual flat?"

Mr Lee: "What do you mean getting the actual flat? You mean getting a flat in the area you wanted you mean?"

Lester: "Something like that. Yeah I will guess so."

Patrick Daniel: "Are you saying that you feel that your generation will have it harder?"

Lester: "Yeah, we'll definitely have it harder, that's right."

Patrick Daniel: "Why do you feel that?

Lester: "As competition grows, I'm sure that we will have to work harder to push the economy up, to keep the standard rising."

Mr Lee: "Let me ask you this?"

Lester: "Right."

Mr Lee: "Harder against say your father. What was your father doing?"

Lester: "My father is an entrepreneur."/

Mr Lee: "When he was 19, what was he doing?"

Lester: ".../newspaper, cycling down, I think distributing newspapers."

Mr Lee: "How old, what year was it when he was 19 do you think?"

Lester: "1950s 1960s."

Mr Lee: "Right, 1950, 1960s. He was cycling, distributing newspapers and he's ended up sending you to Polytechnic./

Mr Lee: "He started life with lower prospects did he in the 1950s. It was a very poor Singapore. Very poor prospects. It was a slummy, broken down Singapore with inadequate housing, inadequate drainage, no sewers, you still had the toti man, you know they carry all this buckets and put it on, everyday they clear your WC and from there, we've got today Singapore. You start off with today Singapore and you tell me you're worse off than your father. How can that be?"

Yvonne: "Senior Minister my name is Yvonne Lim, I'm 24 and I've been two years as a journalist with The New Paper/ if you became Prime Minister today/is there a set of values which you will include in what you would like to instil in Singaporeans the way that you started out with the values of economic survival and success when you started out 30 years ago?"/

Mr Lee:"First, let me say I would not wish to relive my life because I think you live it once and I'm quite satisfied with what I have. Already lived in life but I would advise my younger colleagues to try and get across to our people that the fundamentals have not changed that we either pull together or we will perish together.. A few can escape you know, said I've got assets, I've got connections, I've got a house in Australia or in Sydney whatever Perth and I'm off. Not really thereafter, they'll be thoroughly unhappy. You're an outsider. How long can you live on your savings? Can you do well as in Singapore? / that's the first lesson we must learn. This is our country, we've made it. It has made us and we have made it. It is an interaction between the country, the society and ourselves. Our interaction with each other has made us what we are.

"Is material success necessary? I say absolutely because without material success nothing else can happen./
But I would add that there is a balance between the material and the non-material, the spiritual side of life which I would be very sad if we did not also have that. I seen it called hard C, soft C. Whatever it is it's yin and yang. The idea of male and female, you know the symbol. Human beings need that balance.

If we were all out for material success and we did not have the either side, the sense of equity, the sense of fair play, we wouldn't have today's Singapore. So that even the slowest they get prizes. Ninety per cent now own their homes and we stretch as we went down we had to subsidise more and more the people who are less successful and some of them can never be very successful because nature was not so generous to them, the drive is not there and many other problems. But we try to create a fair society so we have no beggars. You go to many developed countries, beggars, tramps, sleeping parks, public places, underground stations, there's something missing. It is the softer side of us. We have homes for them. We try and cater. So for the individual. I mean I would say to my grandchild for instance or my grandchildren if all you have is material success and you don't have a sense of the aesthetic of the spiritual a sense of being part of the community, of courtesy, compassion then something is missing."/

Flora: "Senior Minister. I'm Flora Tan and I'm 23 this year and I'm the Senior Business Development Executive at CAD-IT Consultants/ we, Singaporeans, have been encouraged strongly and urged to be the best in whatever we do and strive for excellence. And this has inevitably resulted in most Singaporeans having high aspirations. However, it is also natural for most people to work really hard only when they are able to see tangible rewards./ I was hoping that Senior Minister, you could actually give us some practical suggestions perhaps to make it more acceptable for Singaporeans to expect less but yet at the same time to continue to aspire and strive for the best?"/

Renita: "Senior Minister, I'm sorry if you would allow me to continue as well./ my name is Renita Chua. I'm 22 years old. I'm reading my honours here at the National University of Singapore./ like Mei Pin, and we study very hard and we know that we have keys to open the doors. But when we are fed to the lions in the working world, we're told, "Lower your expectations." So, Sir, my question to you is how can we change our mindset to propel us to the future in the face of global competition?"

Mr Lee: "Well, I'm not so sure that it is a mindset alone. I mean, mindset is part of the problem. I think the way I would phrase the problem or explain the problem would be a multifaceted one. First, should we try our best, each individual? I say yes. If you can achieve 90 points, why achieve 70? So, I would urge everyone to go for the maximum that he or she can achieve. I did that for my three children. They are all of different abilities in different areas. But we pushed, my wife and I, pushed each one to his or her limit, allowed them to go. But the moment you reach that limit, don't push it harder because you will break. The elasticity can go only that far and you've got to recognise it./ So, you've got to assess each person...you will all have children, I hope, but you go to the limit of the child. Don't push it beyond the limit.

After a while, you'll know that it's reaching its limit. Now, if you can achieve 90 don't achieve 70, but you ask me if you don't become Number One, therefore, you curl up and die or face the wall or crumple. No. You take a deep breath and you try again. But at the end of the day, you must have a sense of realism. What can you do as against the other competitors in this field?/
So, I was glad that the young man from the Poly says, "My first buy is a four-room flat." Now, I think that is within his reach, probably a five-room flat by the time he's worked two years or three years before he gets married. And it is our planning. We have set aside enough land for the next 20 years to see that everybody will have a home, an affordable home. Now, you say we should not
allow HDB prices to go up. I say, just a moment. There are 660,000 homeowners and you want us to depress the value of their properties? Yes, there are 80,000 or 90,000 waiting to upgrade and to buy a new one and so, they want their prices down. But they want their prices of flats they are selling high; otherwise, they can't buy their new ones. So, you can't have it both ways and I think the right thing is to let the market decide."/

Li Shin: "Good evening, Sir, I'm Li Shin from NTU. I'm 24 and I'm doing engineering./ I was wondering, with the current course that we're going through, our parents, having so much ambition on their children, is there anyway that we can cultivate our children to be more spiritually guided than just by materialistic gains?"

Mr Lee: "This is one of our major problems and I don't know how to solve it. Most societies have a principal religion./ We are multi-racial. That's one of our really big problems. A nation, if you go by the classical definition, "a group of people with distinctive characteristics", that means usually one race, speaking one language in a defined area, sharing one destiny, usually one religion. We are not, we are polyglot. We've come here as a result of the accident of the development of the British Empire./ So, how do we gel the spiritual side?/

Our best solution, the best solution I can think of is to have non-religious moral precepts, right, wrong, good, bad and in Chinese civilisation... This is one of the fortunate things why we can adopt such a system, such an attitude because the Chinese were never dogmatic about religion. They were accommodating and you behave well in this world not because you're going to go to hell if you behave badly or go to heaven if you behave well. You behave well in this world because that is the only way in which society can live peacefully and be happy and, therefore, with the loss of religion in the West, because of the fear vanishing, fear of punishment and hell, so, there is no more control.

It's a very difficult problem for them, but in the East where the Japanese, the Chinese, the Koreans and I think the Vietnamese too, that
has not been the main factor, reward or punishment in the hereafter but good behaviour because it will shame your family, it will shame your clan. So, please behave in this way. May be that is the answer."

Siew Pheng: "Senior Minister, my name is Siew Pheng. I'm with the Ministry of Information and the Arts and I'm 25 years old. Bringing together what we have said about the Singapore Dream, I think what we are looking for is a quality in life and if we temper that with our realism, then that might force us to look to the region which is what I'd like to bring up as a possible scenario of marrying the two realism and our aim to achieve this Singapore Dream. Emigration becomes a possible scenario because with our income levels and our strong dollar, we go to the region, we can afford a lot of things which we cannot afford back home. Do you think in your view there is any sort of a national identity which can prevent this en mass exodus?"

Harrisfazila: "Sir, if I may on the related issue. My name is Harrisfazila Zaidi. I'm a Honours student in NUS right now. I'm 24 years old. ...

Mr Lee: "Honours in what subject?"

Harrisfazila: "In Theatre."

Mr Lee: "I didn't know that NUS did theatre. I am out of touch."

Harrisfazila: "I am the second batch. I like to touch on a related note./ I'm 24 and this is the problem I see. For the record, I don't believe the Singapore dream of the five Cs is shared by all of us and what I am concerned about is what she said. What is to stop other people from emigrating and I am touching upon what you said the unravelling of the glue. From what I see the Government is aware of the problem. I think our Prime Minister has said it quite clearly that there are those who will be on the very fast track of life, riding planes, and there will be the rest of us on bicycles.

We'll all progress yet we'll never be quite there if our aspirations remain as they are. I believe what the problem is an inevitable consequence of the pursuit of education. Am I making sense here...What I'm asking is what is the Government doing to have more glue."

Mr Lee: "Yes, I understand you. I think I understand your concern. It is a very deep and decisive question which will decide our future. We are not an old nation or an old people./ We are completely a new synthetic creation. What holds us together? Quite frankly what brought our parents here, a better life than what they left behind. So, I use to tell the crowds that I addressed in the 1950s that if we do not give ourselves a better life then what China, India, Indonesia can give, the loyalties will just vanish. What is there in Singapore? The position today is different. Why? Because we have shared a common experience at least since the Japanese occupation./ If I meet a Chinese as I did in London when I was a student, I could know immediately within a few minutes of talking to him whether he shared my background. If he came from Malaya or Singapore, I could spot it immediately. But is that strong enough? I don't think it is. With a Jew it's different, with the Israeli. He's a Jew, he's conscious of it. Wherever he is, he's always suffered as a minority. So, he's going to fight for Israel, sometimes quite unreasonably./
"Do we have to do that? For the ten, 15 per cent at the top may be even now that the big countries want English-educated Singaporeans, maybe even 20, 30 per cent in gradual numbers not one shot going to New Zealand or Australia or Canada. I think they'll take us as they are taking Hongkong and if we lose that top 20 per cent, 30 per cent Singapore can't run. Every family has got a son or daughter brighter than the others. They are never equal. No family is equal except identical twins. Everyone of us we do well, we have brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins who haven't done as well. If you don't feel for them and you have taken advantage of the society and the education it gave you and you walk off, they are in the lurch. My generation we asked ourselves this question because we were taking on not only the British but also the communist and if we lost, there's a nasty fate for us and we decided to fight./ It was enough for a small group of people to feel strongly about it and decided to dig their toes in and to fight otherwise there would be no Singapore but because we said no we will fight for this, there is a Singapore.

"Are there enough Singaporeans to save Singapore? That is a question that I ask myself and the position is very different now because up till 1965 I studied this issue very carefully, up till 1965 the big empty spaces, Australia, Canada, the US, New Zealand, they locked their doors against non-Whites.

In 1965, the Americans changed their law. That was followed by Canada, Australia and then New Zealand and immediately Malaysians who used to come here for their education or used to come and work here, good Malaysians, left, leap-frogged us to Australia, New Zealand and Canada. So we lost good men, many of whom were educated in Singapore because we had better educational facilities. What's to stop our own people from going? Nothing except a sense of obligation to your family, to your cousins, to your nieces, to your people who have to depend upon you to keep this place afloat.

"My assessment is we are always going to have a five to ten per cent attrition rate, depending on how the economy does because five to ten per cent of the top 30 per cent are mobile./ this is a new phenomena of a mobile world, mobile for those at the top and I think we cannot expect zero loss. That's not possible. You tell me we lose five, ten per cent, I say that's bearable but not the very best. The very best we must keep or we will lose that cutting edge./

"We're now fanning out every year, going to all the top English-speaking universities and some European universities too, non-English speaking, looking for Asians who are willing to work and settle here to make up for that five to ten per cent loss and we are making up because we offer better life than what they can get if they went back to their own countries or stayed on in America or Britain or Australia or New Zealand or Europe because they know that they are going to face all kinds of glass ceilings and they want to stay in an Asian environment and so we are able to make up. But they cannot be in the inner core. You can use them as additions to do functional jobs, to run statistics or non-security jobs, non-security sensitive jobs. The actual hard core of policy-making you must have people born, bred here with a feel for the place who will look at the issue and say no, that solution is out./ if at the end of the day we can't find a hard core of good men, dedicated to Singapore's survival, I say yes, sell out, finish, that's the end of it."/

Sanjay: "I'm Sanjay Perera from the Straits Times and I'm 32 years old..."

Mr Lee: "Are you married?"

Sanjay: "Not yet, Sir, I hope to be. One of the concerns we have, Sir, is that apart from the 5Cs, there is one big C which is missing, and that is "country". I think we feel that in order for the country to progress over and above the material needs, which are essential, the citizens must feel that they can partake in a political discussion with their leaders without feeling compelled to join a political party or having a sledgehammer coming down on their heads."

Mr Lee: "Having a what?"

Sanjay: "A sledgehammer, Sir."

Mr Lee: "Yes, but if you come out with nonsensical propositions and it is not demolished, they will gain credence. Surely. I mean, this is, as the Americans call it, a "marketplace of ideas". So, you put your ideas out in the market place. If it is unsound, we are allowing a virus to spread. We've got to kill that virus. You must be prepared for it. But if you want to participate in a political discussion against the Government, you will have to be prepared to knock the Government and be knocked back if you are wrong. Otherwise, the Government gets knocked all around. At the end of the day, you say, "Oh, the Government is in the wrong."/

Sanjay: "The point here, Sir, is that I believe that there should be OB markers. I don't think that's an issue here. I think will the OB markers be made more transparent? Will we know what they are? As we mature as a society, in a democracy, will we be able to amend, extend the latitude of these OB markers, change, maybe remove some? That's what I want to know."

Mr Lee: "I'm not in charge. So, you have to speak to the Prime Minister and his colleagues. As far as I am concerned, my OB markers were very clear. You fool around with race, language, religion and you cause a riot, long before you cause a riot, I'm going to out a stop to it because I've seen what happens when you play around with people's emotions over languages, over religions, over race and so on. So, I don't believe you can have a free play there.

"You will notice even in America where they pride themselves on free play, every idea, they are very, very careful when they talk about Afro-Americans or Blacks or Negros or whatever. Anything likely to cause offence, they shy away from. And once upon a time, Negro was a bad word then it became Black. Then now, Black is a bad word and it becomes Afro-American. And so, it keeps on, but, you know, it's a highly sensitive subject. And we have highly sensitive subjects too. I mean, you know them, I know them. So let's not go and dig that sore. I mean, we are not a homogenous society./

I have never bothered about anybody taking me on on political subjects. I just take them back./ I mean, all these years I've fought against consumption subsidies, which were then in the 1960s and 1970s, the conventional wisdom of the West. Every society in the West, as it became successful, subsidised consumption, not subsidise the capacity to earn more money like education or health or housing, all the things which enable a person to improve his capacity. I fought it. Every time they came out, I crushed the idea. Unemployment benefits, this benefit, that benefit, pensions. I said "No. CPF, add to it."/

"So, when you put up an idea which I know is wrong and believe profoundly to be wrong and will do us harm, I must crush it. I don't crush you, I crush your idea. I mean, if I'm wrong then my ideas deserve to be crushed. Maybe "crush" is a harsh word, but this is a harsh world. It is a contest of whose idea is right because if it is wrong, we are going to do harm to many people."

Jonathan: "I'm Jonathan Wee from Nanyang Polytechnic. I'm 20 his year and I'm doing banking. My query Senior Minister is in your opinion is entrepreneurship the most realistic way to getting your five Cs. If it is, doesn't it make a mockery of the educational system because you, sir, have mentioned that entrepreneurs are born and not made?"

Mr Lee: "No, it doesn't not mean that it makes a mockery of the education system. Entrepreneurs, a good entrepreneurs you either have it in you or you do not have it in you but a good entrepreneurs who is also educated is likely to do better because he has more knowledge, quicker access to data and so on. He knows where to get more data, he has more networks. I don't see how entrepreneurship knocks out the value of work or education because the entrepreneurs finally have to make use of people who can work for him. You can't just be a Bill Gates and you think up bright ideas and you don't need people. You need other well-educated people and you have got to get them to implement your ideas.

"People are born differently, different talents, some are musical, some are not, some are good in mathematics, some are good at words and so on, some are good at shapes and forms. So, what you are good at you have to discover. In fact one of the critical purposes of education, one of the critical objectives of education, a good education system should help a person to discover himself vis-à-vis other people. What is it you have? I give you a simple explanation. /

"If you look at the old HDB flats, they are all like boxes assembled. So, I said what's happening? Why don't we have different shapes and forms. The same thing happened. We were recruiting them into the architecture faculty based on `O' Levels without art. One day my son came back and he said his friend was getting a scholarship to do architecture in Cambridge and they did not want him for the entrance examination. They wanted a portfolio of his paintings. I said "God, that's the reason why ours were match boxes". The first thing before you are admitted to do architecture in a good British university, let me see a portfolio of your paintings. How artistic are you? So, we changed it. I got hold of the Vice-Chancellor and said, "Do something."

"That's about 20 years ago. Now, you see the new HDBs, different shapes, colours, forms. Why? Because the people who were taken into the architecture faculty had natural talent.

If you ask me to draw an orange, I'll be hard put. I can take a photograph but I once had a drawing test in primary school and I saw my next pupil, he took his finger and we used to have pastel colours and he did and I thought it looked wonderful. The orange suddenly looked like a real orange. I did the same to mine and he got 90 marks and I got 30. So, you see if we ran a good education system, it is not only tailored for academic purpose but for musical, artistic, dance movement, God knows, how many other things people require to make a complete society and we haven't got a complete education system but we will get it into place over the next ten, 15 years. All the refinements have to be put in place. So, if you tell me that you've got a worse future than your father, I said, how can it be? What kind of school did your father go to? What kind of schools did you go to? Every year the opportunities of cultivating and bringing out the best in the pupil is improving because we are building that capability.

"At the end of the day what kind of society we become really depends upon what the sum total of us, all of us, are able to contribute but when we add a social glue it is the prerequisite of being a nation. If we don't have that and we are just so many individuals, we won't survive. You look at it this way. Can you run SIA, Singapore Airlines, without Singapore? You can't. You need a seat in the international community, then you can negotiate air services agreement. Without that, where do you go? So, the first thing we have to remember is preserve this distinctive personality which you and I together constitute as Singapore and Singaporeans."

Harpreet: "In your view Senior Minister apart from paying Singaporeans top dollar, is there anything else we can offer them in the form of a dream or vision to rally them as a people? In your view what is the Singapore dream?"

Mr Lee: "I did not see it in terms of, I don't know what I would do if I were a young man brought up in Singapore, born say in 1970 and 26 years now, I cannot say because that's not my experience but when I was a young man, there was no such thing as a Singapore. We were part of the British empire and you had a British passport and you could travel anywhere in the British empire. Nationalism and decolonisation came after that in the 1950s and 60s. Now as a result of the fallout, we have little Singapore. Is it worth it? You ask yourself: are you better off if you were born where your father was or you grandfather was? I've asked myself this question. My grandfather was born here but my great grandfather was born in Tapu in Guangdong. I have no doubt to say I'm better off here and I think my children and grandchildren have no doubts that they are better off here and if they are not willing to fight for it, then they deserve to perish or flee and you will never be happier then here. That's the final answer. Is there such a country? Yes, it is called Singapore, we built it, it belongs to us and it's not a country to be ashamed of. Can you say more? Can we say more?"