

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MO. AUG. 33/68 (DEF)

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE,
MR. WEE TOON BOON, AT THE NTUC CARNIVAL AT KALLANG
PARK ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, AT 5 P.M.

I am extremely pleased to be here this evening to join you all in your celebration of our National Day.

Three years have passed since we became an independent and sovereign State. The prophets of doom predicted that Singapore would disintegrate as it had no legs to stand on as an independent nation. But in these three years we have shown that we are a people with courage and conviction and imbued with the spirit to face all the challenges and problems that arise. Indeed, the last three years had seen great progress — progress which has outstripped even the pre-independent years.

The fourth year of our independence, however, ushers in an era of problems of unprecedented magnitude as a result of the proposal by the British to withdraw their forces by 1971. These problems cannot be left alone but they must be tackled, if we are to maintain not only our present rate of progress but also to ensure that we create the necessary favourable conditions to ensure our continued economic development, encourage foreign investors to come in to set up more industries and create much-needed employment opportunities for our people.

In the context of the situation that is fast developing before us, the role of labour in the task of economic construction takes on a new colour and it is to be lasting credit of the NTUC that it has given its whole-hearted support to the new labour legislation that was recently passed by Parliament and which today is already law. This is a clear indication that the NTUC which represents the democratic trade union movement in Singapore has replaced sectional interests with the national interests which overrides everything else.

This carnival which is held today is a manifestation of the fact that in celebrating this year's National Day, the NTUC is further identifying itself with the nation and its multi-racial people whose future depends a great deal on the productive performance and contribution of labour, which in turn will engender confidence and progress.

I am sure that at this carnival the workers whilst enjoying themselves will also bear in mind that future enjoyment of this type will depend a great deal on what we all can achieve.

I am extremely pleased now to declare this carnival open.

AUGUST 17, 1968.

(Time issued: 1500 hours)