

PRESS RELEASE:

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PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF
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Singapore has proved in the past ⁵ years that it can survive and flourish. This means we can also survive and flourish in the next ⁵⁰ ~~40~~ years, ⁵⁰ ~~400~~ years or even ⁵⁰ 4,000 years as long as the minds of men can be cleared of outmoded ideas and attitudes and furnished with new ideas fast enough. I know it is a very painful business to change one's ideas and attitudes but this is not as quarter as painful as the disaster that could overwhelm us if our ideas do not keep pace with the changing times.

And, let me say here, that the next ten years will see more profound and still more rapid changes than we had experienced during the past ten years. We cannot foresee accurately the nature and extent of these changes nor have I the time tonight to list out some of the meaningful changes that we can already see.

But let me mention one of them. One of these is the British decision to withdraw militarily from Singapore and South-East Asia. This means that Singapore must find other ways of ensuring its security in an area of the world where instability and violence are increasing rather than decreasing.

In-so-far as this is a military and economic problem we can, I believe, tackle it provided our people respond with the new attitudes of mind necessary to successfully meet this challenge. The first of these is never to be intimidated by the magnitude of a problem — whether military, economic or political. Once a people say: "What's the use?" that is also the moment of their defeat. What is required is the attitude of mind which says: "It's unpleasant but if that's the only way then we will do it come what may."

Both recent and ancient history has shown that a people and a society infused with this kind of spirit can surmount obstacles, do overcome adversaries, however formidable however stronger these may appear. No people is

defeated by problems or enemies until the will to resist is broken.

This is not rethoric. It is a fact and Singapore has already proved it. When just over five years ago Singapore became independent there were the gloomy prophets, both within and without Singapore, who said we were finished. They said a small island without natural resources and with a population of two million must drift slowly into bankruptcy. And they produced economic "facts" to prove their case. Within the limits of their "facts" their case was formidable.

But now, some five years after, Singapore's economic performance has been sounder and more hopeful than the gloomy prophets had predicted. Where did their case go wrong? They went wrong because they omitted one very crucial fact — the fact of human will. They did not know that we would not allow ourselves to be intimidated and paralysed into inaction by the prophets of woe. The facts were undoubtedly grim but instead of saying, "What's the use" we decided, by sheer act of will, to change the facts. This is important. For the most part political, social and economic "facts" can be changed because "facts" of this kind are man-made facts. May be a small country cannot change some political facts and some economic facts but there are many facts which two million people, with a single will, can change.
