

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC.AUG.49/70(EDUN)

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, IN CHE MOHD. GHAZALI
ISMAIL, AT JOURNALISTS' DINNER AT THE SINGAPORE
CONFERENCE HALL ON SAT., AUGUST 29, AT 7.30 P.M.

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A newspaperman - like everyone else - has a right to comment, both by word of mouth and in writing, on matters of public interest and general concern, so long he or she does so fairly and with an honest purpose. Scooping a story for reasons of professional and commercial competitions, and ignoring the immediate interest of the nation and special interest of specific cases, might not be conducive to achieving an honest purpose. No single agency has a greater responsibility than the Press in a democratic society and the manner in which it is discharged will partly determine whether our form of social democratic institution will survive against the anti-national barbarians.

Newspapers are now so much a part of our daily lives that we take them for granted, like the water from the tap or the air we breathe. It is legitimate to wonder how far, once you have printed them, they help to mould man's mind. Do most of our two million people who scan them daily do so to help them think, or to learn how to be wiser or better? Or do people read them as an escape, or because they are bored? For the journalist, as for the wider public, newspapers are a means of spreading information and ideas, a vast projection of normal conversation. As such we can consider their present position and prospects.

In Singapore, newspapers should play a more responsible role. It is not the Government's intention to restrict the freedom of the Press to print articles of news interest and of journalistic value. But it is our duty and responsibility as a Government to see that the people who have elected us to power would be given a fair chance to consume correct information of what is going on in the country and the countries around us, and be provided with precise facts and figures so that they could form the most correct opinion of their Government, their people, their country and the region as a whole.

Newspaper enterprise, like any other business institutions, works for commercial aims. We encourage every enterprise to prosper and to progress. It helps our economy and the well-being of the country. But if any enterprise, be it a newspaper or otherwise, works for non-commercial aims and subvert the minds of our people, and interfere with the political and national matters of Singapore's established philosophies, ...2/-

established philosophies, then it is our paramount duty to protect the long-term interest of our people and our nation.

Our newspapers by and large have done good job for the people and the country. They understand the problems of the people, and I know they try fairly hard towards solving the problems by helping to create the right atmosphere.

AUGUST 29, 1970.

(Time issued: 1725 hours)
