

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LANDS & HOUSING,
THE HON. ENCHE ABDUL HAMID BIN HAJI JUMAT, AT THE OPENING OF
THE NEW STANVAC DEALERS' ASSOCIATION ON SAT., JULY 12, 1958.

It was with great pleasure that I accepted your invitation to open today the new premises of your Standard-Vacuum Dealers Association. Your aim is, I see from your rules, "to regulate relations between employer and employee, or between one member and another, and endeavour to adjust differences between these parties by amicable and conciliatory means."

As a political leader that last phrase makes me sigh with nostalgia, as amicableness and conciliatoriness are not the most obvious characteristics of our politics in Singapore, even on the threshold of self-government.

But although my calling has not learned from your calling, I can always say, "Do as I tell you; and not as I do." For this political field is only one field in our Singapore estate and there are other fields, economic, cultural and social, which must be cultivated so that the seed of self-government can grow rapidly and sturdily. In associations of like-minded people such as yours, and in the achievement of unity we are building a stronger community, a closer web of relationships to bind us together to face the great, but not insurmountable, tasks ahead.

You represent a prominent part of our Singapore scene. It is not possible to travel far without seeing your Pegasus, but I must confess that a visitor of Mars would be puzzled to discover why a shell always seemed to be found close to your flying horse, as if it were the object of its search. In any case, as no doubt the modern Sputniks will put the old air-borne horses out of business and out to grass, no doubt you will be serving under the same name, but another emblem.

Yet leaving the men of Mars to their problems and returning to ours, the rapid growth of the sales of petrol, which we as Ministers watch with delight as contributing greatly through taxation to our welfare schemes for Singapore, is a sign of our rising standard of living. We have 75,000 motor vehicles in Singapore, one for every 20 of our population, one for every 10 adults, one for every four households. This is four times the number of cars in 1947, and double the number in 1951.

Our business, our leisure, our education depend on them, and they have ceased to be the luxury of the few. And the straightening and widening of our roads proceeds apace while on the parking problem appears to baffle us. But the rate of growth is the rate of our progress. Our achievement of self-government reflects rapid progress in our development, but it also represents the challenge of our self-government, that our economy must be geared to the same speed of growth in the production of wealth, and to the same trend of change in the distribution of wealth, if self-government is to prove our capacity and fulfil our high expectations.

Whatever changes must come in our economic and social life must come without damage to industrial or communal relationships - in short we must seek progress, but we must seek it, as your rules put it, by "amicable and conciliatory means," by the path of unity. We are too crowded a community and too dependent on the commerce of our market place, to risk the irresponsibility of quarrels over irrelevancies. Rather are responsibility, relevance and resourcefulness the ingredients of success in achieving Merdeka.

Ladies and2/-

Ladies and Gentlemen, my I wish you all success in the hospitable atmosphere of your new club-house. May it bring to your association the new surge of life symbolised by the flying horse of the Company you serve.

JULY 12, 1958.

(Time issued at 1440 hours)

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