

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LAW AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MR. E.W. BARKER, AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP AT THE RAFFLES HOTEL ON SUNDAY,

MARCH 23, 1975 AT 8 P.M.

My wife and I thank you for giving us this opportunity to celebrate with you the 10th Anniversary of the Republic of Singapore. We all know that chess is a game that takes a long time, and I suppose that only chess players can think of organising a celebration that has lasted more than a month.

That our 10th Anniversary is certainly worth celebrating no one can deny for we have come a long way since our Republic was founded ten years ago.

We have had a few anxious moments when the going seemed a bit rough, but shrewd planning and hard work, aided by good fortune, has seen us through.

This is not to say that everything is plain sailing now, for in common with most other countries we shall have to cope with one crisis after another; with inflation, deflation, stagflation and what have you.

I suppose what we have to deal with is very much like what you encounter in a chess match against a tough opponent who sets you one problem after another. All that we can do is to try to cater for all expectable contingencies and have faith that our training will see us through the unexpected.

As the Minister for Law and National Development, I am interested to learn that chess players consider good development of their pieces most important in the management of their game. By good development chess players mean that their pieces should be placed on the most effective squares.

I see in this a parallel between good government and good chess players, for a good government must deploy national resources in the best way, just as good chess players deploy their forces efficiently.

Singapore's national resources are mainly the skills of our people for we have neither mineral resources or agricultural land.

How to train and deploy our manpower in developing our national economy is the most important task before the Singapore Government. All our wonderful plans would be frustrated if there are no competent people to carry them out.

Thus, basically, the future of Singapore depends on the willingness of Singaporeans to accept the responsibilities of citizenship; to train themselves in such work as they are able to do, and to be prepared to do a good job of work.

This means that our youth must be educated in the right attitudes for our future lies in their hands. The importance of sport in social planning is that sports provide healthy recreation for young people, builds character, as well as strengthening minds and bodies.

In this context, I am glad to note that chess is growing in popularity in Singapore for it is a sport that is within the reach of all, whether they play in competitions or as a social pastime.

Competitions such as the national championship are important because they encourage players to improve their standards. They also help to interest others in learning how to play the game.

We realise, of course, that our national standard in chess is limited by the fact that our players are all part-time players, that is, they can play chess only in their spare time. However, because aging does not affect the ability of chess players so much as other sportsmen, you have more time in which to develop your skills in chess.

It is possible, therefore, for Singaporeans to attain world-class standards, and to become international chess masters; in time, surely to become grandmasters also.

The results of the national championship show that many young Singaporeans have attained national standards. In fact, they have set the pace in this competition.

This means that the future of our national chess team is in good hands and I am sure that our international results will be much improved.

As our Republic enters its second decade, we look forward to great performances by Singapore's chess players. Their achievements will generate more enthusiasm for chess in Singapore and help to popularise chess.

I am pleased to take part in the closing ceremony of this anniversary championship.

MARCH 23, 1975.

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