

Speech by Dr Goh Keng Swee, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence at the 10th National Day Celebrations of the Kreta Ayer Constituency at the People's Theatre on Tuesday, 12 August 75 at 8.00 pm

The first ten years of Singapore's independence had been a time of fast changes which had affected the life of virtually every citizen of the Republic. The hectic pace of change has confused many people, particularly the young.

The older generation stick to their value system, whether traditional or modern, or a mixture of both. Once these beliefs have jelled, they do not change easily. But it is otherwise with young people trying to understand and to make sense about what is going on.

Many find the traditional value system unacceptable in important respects and tend to question, even reject the lot. Unless people belong to one of the major religions, they may not find it easy to get their bearings on fundamental matters of what is right and what is wrong. Worse still, they may even believe that questions of right and wrong are unimportant, which old-fashioned people find disturbing.

So there is a conflict of opinion on many things between the old and young generations. This is miscalled the generation gap, as if it were something new. Old and young people will disagree as they see things from different view-points. What is new is that the old can no longer suppress the young in the way they used to in past generations because the young now have better opportunities for education and work.

But there are some basic ideas which both young and old can agree upon. First, and most important, is the responsibility of bringing up the new generation. Through centuries of human civilisation, no better method has been devised for this purpose than the family. The extended or the multi-generation family, where grand parents, parents, sons and grand sons live together may be out of date in a modern city state.

But the family of parents and children is not.

It is in happy and secure families of today that a sturdy future generation of Singaporeans will be brought up. When following customs of western societies, we should avoid those which serve to disintegrate family relationships.

Next, whatever traditional virtues one may discard, never abandon the virtue of honesty. A nation whose people lie, cheat and steal, will not rise above miserable levels of livelihood.

Third, believe in the virtue of hardwork. There is a danger that young people may overlook this, having grown up in easy times.

Last, since we live in a congested city, we should make a point of showing consideration to other people. Otherwise, we shall make ourselves and others miserable by quarrelling over petty matters.

If we pay heed to these ideas, we should be able to adjust to the next ten years of change with less confusion and unhappiness. Though we cannot know for sure what changes there will be, we can be certain these changes will be as far-reaching as those of the last ten years.