

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

SPEECH BY TAN ENG LIANG, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT) AT THE ALUMNI INTERNATIONAL SINGAPORE ANNUAL DINNER ON SATURDAY, 8 NOVEMBER, 1975 AT 8.15 PM HELD AT MARCO POLO HOTEL

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I believe it was Plato who said that the affairs of the world will not be satisfactory until the philosophers become rulers, or the rulers become philosophers. I do not know whether all our leaders are philosophers - I have no wish to contradict the eminent Plato - but Singapore's affairs internally and with the world are reasonably satisfactory. It is true that in some areas there is still room for improvement, including some of the social amenities now available to Singaporeans. Progress may necessitate periodical change and improvement in some fields. It is easy to talk about freedom, human rights, inflation, or what's wrong with the world. However, to talk about what's right, devoid of cliches and slogans, is certainly a much more difficult task.

Ladies & Gentlemen, the vast majority of people in Singapore, as in most developing countries, still organise their lives around the struggle to make a reasonable living. Where we live, how well we live, whom we see socially, how we educate our children - all of these facets of our lives are dominated by the work we do. Yet, it is curious that, until recently, social scientists and politicians had little to say about work - an activity which occupies the major portion of a man's waking hours. I would therefore like to comment on some general attitudes of Singaporeans towards work.

We are living through a period of rapid technological and cultural changes, accompanied by a gradual transformation in the work ethic. In the past, Singaporeans shaped their ideas of success around money, occupational status, possessions and the social mobility of their children. These values still count. Certainly, we are drawn to money for its practical uses. But people are no longer as ready to make sacrifices for this kind of success as they were in the past. The person who has opted for an unpleasant life-style in exchange for a high salary is not considered more successful than someone with less money but with an agreeable life-style. There are, of course, lots of people who still adhere to the older view of success as defined exclusively in monetary terms, but the trend is slowly moving away. I think this is good for Singapore as we move to a more modern and equal society.

Today, the public has grown less fearful that economic catastrophe will strike without warning and bring about untold hardships. Inflation disturbs people and causes them to worry about making ends meet. But people are less afraid of losing their jobs or finding themselves in a situation where they are unable to cope economically. This feeling, more than any other, creates a climate of social stability that was lacking in the early sixties when the country faced what then appeared to be the insoluble problems of unemployment, inadequate housing, population growth to mention but a few. This does not mean that now we can afford to be complacent. We must always be sensitive to the realities and create for

ourselves a motivated society, moving on a well-chartered course with a sense of tenacity and purpose. As a motivated society, we must not strive merely to survive. We shall and must strive towards excellence. Ladies & Gentlemen, towards this I invite your commitment.

I have been informed by your President that the Alumni's proposed book, "Singapore - A Decade of Independence" is being launched tonight. I am told that the book is supposed to be a critical appraisal of some aspects of Singapore's development. Development is a challenging and exciting task but it carries with it deep implications and obligations for us. Development is also accompanied by changes and changes are frequently unsettling, upsetting and unpredictable. It is extremely difficult to secure complete consensus in matters connected with development plans and policies, even among development planners. Ideally, common ideals and common loyalties have to be fostered and not enforced. We all know that sometimes circumstances dictate that formal steps must be taken to create conditions in which orderly development can take place. Many carefully formulated plans have had to be fundamentally altered or set aside. But it is this capability for adaptation and innovation to meet new changes or to alter priorities during mid-stream which has been responsible for the success of Singapore's development programmes.

Critics may think differently. In any case, it is always easier to criticise - particularly with the

wisdom of hindsight - and say what went wrong or what should have been done. It is much more difficult to plan what to do and to implement what is to be done. As graduates you are in a better position to understand the problems and complexities of national development. Your role can be no different from mine or that of the factory or office worker and it must be to ensure the survival and prosperity of Singapore and to see that order is preserved amid change.

Ladies & Gentlemen, technological and social developments ensure that modern society will require more and more planning. Deliberate management of the Singapore's future will become widespread. How to combine social planning with personal freedom will emerge as the key dilemma of the future and will replace our previous preoccupation of balancing social needs against requirements of free enterprise. Professionals and graduates can play a meaningful role by widening their social perspectives and increasing their direct involvement in social and community problems through a donation, not only in monetary terms, but also in time, effort and commitment.

Singapore's efforts to make the island Republic into a garden city have shown results over the years as a result of efforts not only by the Government but also the private sector. Efforts on improving the environment cannot be relaxed and must be sustained to ensure that with each succeeding decade we do not only strive for advancement in trade, commerce and technology but also in the beautification of our environment.

The initial effort of planting instant trees has given us the impact required. There is now need to introduce more sophisticated techniques of planting and also the planting of sufficient trees, shrubs and creepers to further enhance the garden city image of Singapore. Quantitative tree planting should therefore now be judiciously interspersed with the planting of not only decorative variety of trees but also be supplemented by fruit trees that would bring back birds to the city and the island as a whole.

Towards this, the Government has spared no efforts to create landscaped pedestrian malls, open spaces and parks not only in new towns but also in the central area under the Urban Redevelopment Programme.

A major effort would be made soon when plans for the reclamation in front of Golden Mile and the Padang as well as Telok Ayer Basin is completed. This reclamation would not only provide land for various types of development needed to supplement our land for our economic and social growth; but also much needed land for the creation of parks and open spaces in the central area where land is expensive and open spaces desirable to complement the intensity of buildings as a result of high land cost.

The creation of large open spaces with landscaping alone would not be sufficient. In time to come there will be need to introduce further sophistication through the design and incorporation of better street furniture,

sculptural ornaments, fountains and lighting to give the required setting for a proper park. In this regard, therefore, the monument proposed by the International Alumni to honour the early pioneers of Singapore would be most appropriate as one of the many features which could be incorporated in the open space plan by Government.

The Urban Redevelopment Authority has been involved in giving advice to the International Alumni on the possible location of this monument since the Authority is charged with the responsibility of planning for the new Marina City for Singapore. Insofar as my Authority is concerned, therefore, we feel that the monument can readily be incorporated in our proposal for landscaping of large portions of the reclaimed land, the exact location can be determined by detailed plan which will take cognizance of this feature so that it will augment the plan of URA for the area.

The International Alumni should, however, spearhead its own effort in getting the required approval and clearance with other relevant authorities since URA cannot be in a position to allocate sites at this juncture but can only help in the siting of such a monument in the total reclamation plan.

The Ministry of National Development will stand by the in-principle approval given on 23 Aug 71 and will help to expedite planning approval on your submission.

In conclusion, my wife and I would like to thank the Alumni for inviting us to join you here tonight.

Thank you.