

SPEECH BY MR JEK YEUN THONG, MINISTER FOR
CULTURE, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
NEW RADIO CENTRE ON 12 DEC 75 AT 6.45 PM

Based on licences issued, in 1955 one out of every 20 persons in Singapore owned a radio receiver. Ten years later, in 1965, it had risen to one out of every fourteen. Today, 10 years later, one person out of every 7 owns a radio receiver.

But the ownership ratio may well be very much higher than the licence figures indicate. A single licence can cover any number of sets in a household and the cost of a pocket transistor radio is well within the reach of many in Singapore.

The steady growth in the ownership of radio receivers took place despite the introduction of Television in early 1963. The new medium, of course, quickly won avid followers. It dominated the mass media stage. I know many radio staff working in the old complex of diverse buildings and hutments felt forgotten in the glare of interest and attention on Television.

But Radio held its own and will continue to do so - even with Colour Television.

There are many reasons for this. I would like, this evening, to refer briefly to only a few.

Radio is so mobile, immediate and comparatively inexpensive. You listen to it in the kitchen, in the car, and even in the bathroom. Members of a household often individually own a transistor. This also enables tuning in to the service or programme of one's choice in accordance with individual tastes as opposed to group and static viewing which generally characterises Television. Radio's effectiveness and reach are best appreciated when urgent advice or information needs to be given - whether this has to do with traffic jams, floods or a national emergency. Because the operating costs of Radio are much lower than for Television and the production of programmes less technically demanding, Radio has been able to maintain a full service for each language stream as well as an FM Stereo Service.

Special interests can be catered for in ways and numbers not feasible for Television. There are numerous programmes for children and programmes for young people. We have a large young population who are, in these times, exposed to a constant barrage of influences - some for good, others less desirable or even undesirable. Radio tries to provide for the balance that is necessary, helping young listeners to be selective and to acquire values relevant to our society. Our women form almost half of our population and deserve enrichment and widening of horizons. Programmes

for them are worked out with this in mind. There is dignity in labour - honest labour. Radio recognises this with programmes specifically for our workers. The interests of parents, road users and the less literate are also catered for. Sports, science, current affairs, books, the arts, health and medicine are subjects with their own programme slots. Local writing - whether prose, poetry or drama - is encouraged by the organisation of competitions as well as the featuring of such writing in programmes of their own. Similarly with the composition of local music. Many of our writers of TV dramas in Malay, Chinese and Tamil gained their experience in writing first for the Radio medium. To encourage creativity and self-expression amongst our young, workshops have been established. Talent discovered and developed, have been given opportunities to perform on Radio, on stage and Television. This Auditorium will become the venue for more audience participation shows; music appreciation sessions for music lovers and students; and more concerts to give those with talent a chance to perform and incentive to raise standards. Visual presentation of music is expensive and, in the case of serious music, not always successful. The FM Stereo Service, established in 1969 primarily to widen appreciation of serious music, has, in the 6 years of its existence, won encouraging response from a growing number of listeners. Given the necessary staff and funds, the Service can be further extended beyond its present 8 hours a day and its content and presentation improved upon.

The contribution of Radio in the political, social and economic development of our nation has tended to be obscured by the sight and sound of Television. But Radio, for instance, rendered invaluable service in the late fifties, helping to avert the grave threat of subversion by its wide propagation of the issues at stake. After Television was introduced, Radio was a strong complement to the efforts to promote national consciousness; to involve our people in the development process by explaining and clarifying problems and objectives; to change attitudes whether it was in terms of blue collar jobs as against white, family planning or the conservation of water. Because each language stream had the amplitude of its own service, Radio could shape its programme approaches not only in terms of a general audience but also in terms of the older generation, the women folk and our youth. Radio will continue to take maximum advantage of this amplitude in the years ahead, assessing and adjusting output in the context of our nation's development.

Perhaps more than TV, Radio will continue to root its output in the milieu in which it operates - whether it is to reflect, inform, question or persuade in the direction of change necessary for the nation's good. But it will not be insular. It cannot be, given our geographical position and the inter-dependence of today's world. It cannot be, given our stake in the region and Radio's reach of our neighbours and peoples beyond.

It now gives me great pleasure to declare this New Radio Centre open.