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SPEECH BY MR S RAJARATNAM, SENIOR MINISTER (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), ON THE OCCASION OF THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND DANCE OF THE SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL ON SATURDAY, 27 JULY 1985 AT 7.30 PM.

I would like to preface my talk tonight with an important clarification. I gather there is some confusion in certain political circles as to whether I left the General Hospital dead or alive. At least two political parties have been keeping vigil in my constituency of Kampong Glam expecting an announcement any moment of either a by-election or a funeral - or, best of all, of both. One hopeful candidate has already set the by-election ball rolling by announcing that, if elected, he would press for the nomination of a descendant of the long dead Sultan of Singapore as our next President.

The other hopeful candidate is from the Singapore Democratic Party. He was frantically distributing leaflets announcing in bold type: "LING HOW DOONG KAMPONG GLAM WALKABOUT" - a clever hint that he could walkabout while presumably I could not.

As this is my first major appearance since leaving hospital, I thought I would take this opportunity to break the bad news to the two gentlemen who have zealously been keeping watch. I am as ready as the next man to meet my Maker, but as the late Winston Churchill once said, what is in doubt at the moment is whether my Maker is prepared for the ordeal of meeting me. As some of you may be aware in the course of the past two years I had received two summons

to turn up but which were inexplicably cancelled and which therefore leads me to believe that my Maker is not yet ready to meet me. So its going to be a long vigil, I'm afraid.

All things considered a stint at the General Hospital, provided you are still alive, is a rewarding experience. There is nothing like a hospital bed, with its gentle hint of mortality, to make for clear thinking and sharp focussing of ideas. My talk tonight can therefore be described as "Thoughts from a hospital bed". It was there also that I thought of the title of my next talk should I ever be invited to inflict one. So the title my talk bears tonight is: "Smiting the Philistines." It has, I agree, a theological flavour, but oddly enough thoughts in a hospital seem to veer, sooner or later, in that direction. You may also know that the smiting of Philistines has according to tradition to be administered with the jawbone of an ass - or its equivalent thereof. So if in the course of my address you become aware of the cracking of thick skulls, do not be alarmed because it would simply be a case of the irresistible meeting the incorrigible.

While in hospital I thought over the many good things and bad things that had happened in Singapore since the last general elections. Among the good things is that a younger generation of P.A.P. leaders have moved to centre stage, which is as it should be. It has also resulted in a few surly veterans of P.A.P. Long March - a 25 year march - quite understandably taking the view that the displacement of the old by the young was both unwise and unjust.

My younger colleagues have, quite wisely, not tried to mimic the style and demeanour of the Old Guard brought up in what I could only describe as the streetfighting days of Singapore politics. Those were the days of political

knuckle dusters and of Queensbury rules revised and edited to cope with communists, communalists, racialists and gangster-backed politicians whose armoury of blackmail, intimidation and corruption included grenades, revolvers, acid bottles, parangs and changkols.

A few people at that time publicly censured our political style, but privately they were relieved that their censures went unheeded. They knew that had we fought our violent and dangerous adversaries with kid gloves and Queensbury rules we would today be living in a typical Third World environment - a world of squalor, irremediable poverty, endemic communal and racial carnage, political murders and periodic coups and of course regular food parcels and medicine from philanthropic organisations.

Even Mr Jeyaretnam and Mr Chiam must today be glad that we were unmoved by the charges of oppression, infringement of human rights, P.A.P. arrogance, intimidation and denial of democratic freedom which the local Communists, aided and abetted by foreign journalists and organisations flung at the P.A.P. for years. Had we not done so the re-echoing of these same charges by these two gentlemen would today not be made or if made would be speedily and fatally terminated.

The younger leaders have adopted a freer and more relaxed kind of politics as befitting a new generation less beset by the anxieties and terrors that haunted the older generation. The stern visage of the Old Guard (though I can assure you that the stern visages were coupled with stout hearts not bereft of the milk of human kindness) has been replaced by smiling leaders who invite and even enjoy criticism and debate. Judging by public reactions this new style has resulted in more open politicisation of the public; in the flowering of free, frank and on the whole sincere criticism. Some of these has resulted in

modifications of some policies of the Old Guards who have persisted, rightly or wrongly, in believing that good government consists in doing what they think is right and not going by what the popularity polls tell them. This is a conviction reinforced by the fact that its application over the past 25 years rescued an independent Singapore from what many predicted must be inevitable collapse, degradation and eradication.

My younger colleagues in conformity with their new relaxed style also adopted a "Let's be kind to the Opposition" policy. Since there are 77 P.A.P. MPs as against two Opposition members who insist on putting up a public act of living under P.A.P. terror and possible liquidation, my younger colleagues sought to put them at their ease by lavishing extra kindness. There was also the hope that since these two gentlemen had an almost pathological aversion for facts and logic then the only way they could be led up the path of rationality was with the carrot of tolerance and kindness. For seven months now my young colleagues have been applying this over-optimistic policy of winning the two gentlemen through kindness. To counter the perennial complaint that the voice of the opposition had been brutally silenced, the P.A.P. leaders, much to the chagrin of P.A.P. backbenchers, discriminated against them by giving the two Opposition MPs far more T.V. exposure time than either their speeches or rules of fair play justified.

Far from acknowledging that the Government had manifested commendable tolerance, the two gentlemen have been striking poses before T.V. cameras and outside suggestive of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian. They both try to give the impression of men being relentlessly hunted and hounded by a ruthless government. I am absolutely fascinated by one of them as he slowly limps towards the

microphone like a being wounded by the slings and arrows of the P.A.P., composes his face to suggest a man in the throes of deep agony and then complains about P.A.P. persecution. His companion is also equally loud in his complaints of harassment and muzzling of free speech despite the fact we have had many occasions to see and hear over the T.V. his often unintelligible discourses which he from time to time mercifully illuminates with brilliant flashes of creative lunacy.

As I expected the "Be Kind to the Opposition" approach has been misread by the Opposition. It saw the kid-glove handling as evidence that the Government now stood in fear and trembling of the Opposition; that the popular tide had turned against the Government and that the liberation of Singapore from P.A.P. oppression was now a goal within reach.

All these years up to the time of the December elections both Mr Jeyaretnam and Mr Chiam repeatedly stated that their goal was not the electoral overthrow of the P.A.P. but, as a loyal opposition, to exhort and criticise the Government whenever it strayed from the straight and narrow path of righteousness. Their speeches and writings are replete with what they thought were necessary assurances.

But the kid glove approach has obviously brought about a mutation in their old thinking. Their new aspiration is one that has clearly outstripped their capability. Their approach and that of their supporters has been that any vigorous response by Government, such as the one you are listening to now, should be condemned as intimidation and harassment of the opposition. True democracy, the Opposition and their friends have maintained, is the right of the opposition to freely harass

the government with falsehoods and innuendos but with the guarantee that it should not be harassed in return by the Government. Democracy means attacking the government not the right of government to defend itself. This is the pernicious doctrine which I have always questioned and which, after nearly seven months of exasperated and restless silence, I transgress by making the kind of speech I am making tonight.

One reason why I have brought out my political knuckle duster is to clear any misunderstanding on the part of the two opposition MPs and those behind them that the soft talk policy can be a signal for adventurist politics of the kind we had in the old days. I am a firm believer in President Theodore Roosevelt's very wise and realistic principle of democratic government: "Talk softly but always carry a big stick."

My speech will most certainly expose me to the charge of intimidation of the opposition; of intolerance of criticism. I will not be impressed. The rules of politics must be, as they always have been, this. If an opposition declares that instead of being a vehicle of constructive criticism it will now become a vehicle for bringing down the ruling government, then it is well within Queensbury rules for a prudent government to bring down the opposition first. If the intention of an Opposition is to destroy a ruling government then the latter must destroy the opposition first - all within the rules.

In view of the changed goals and objectives that Mr Jeyaretnam and Mr Chiam have announced for their parties, I, as a battle-scarred Old Guard, would urge my younger colleagues that while talking softly they should equip themselves, if they are finnick, then at least with rubber knuckle dusters - or the equivalent thereof. I shall be glad to teach them how to use it as a gentleman should.

Let me now give the reason why I think our approach to the two opposition parties must change.

The Worker's Party has now got a new vision of its role. By whom and from where this new goal was conceived is, as of now, a matter for pure conjecture. We were given first intimations of the new vision in a Sunday Times report of February 3 this year and I quote: "Singaporeans have stopped accepting the People's Action Party as the natural party to govern Singapore. This was (Mr Jayaretnam said) evident from the last general election." The last claim is pure delusion which from time to time afflicts the M.P. from Anson. Two seats out of 79 cannot by any stretch of the imagination be taken as evidence that the P.A.P. has lost its natural right to govern. The opposition combined polled 34 per cent of the votes cast in contested constituencies in Singapore but only about 20 per cent of votes if you include all constituencies in Singapore.

The point now is not whether his claims are true or not but whether he believes his delusions - and why.

I think he does because he was emboldened on the 14th of May to warn the Government in Parliament that, and I quote from the Straits Times, "if you do not allow expression of constitutional rights, as the Prime Minister said, the alternative is armed struggle." Who will start the armed struggle?

Now I do not believe for one moment that Mr Jeyaretnam is a violent man but I cannot say the same about the Worker's Party. That Party has during its devious history harboured men with a criminal past or with a propensity for violence. The Worker's Party once put up as candidates two members of a fanatical religious organisation intent on sparking religious riots in Singapore to further their aim.

Fortunately they were tracked down by the Government in time and put away. They together with three other core members of the Singapore People's Liberation Organisation are still serving out their prison sentences.

It twice put up a thief as a candidate, even after his criminal record was made public.

It put up as candidate a man sentenced to a prison term for revealing State secrets.

It had another candidate who was fined for assaulting a taxi driver.

There is also at the moment a case pending in court against a Worker's Party candidate and his supporter as a result of rowdiness outside a polling centre at the last elections.

The potentials for violence within the Worker's Party is not just my opinion. It is also the opinion of a correspondent on the Far Eastern Economic Review and who is an unabashed admirer of Mr Jeyaretnam. This is what he wrote in that journal on 11th July 1985: "During the December election campaign, Jeyaretnam once drew a crowd of 10,000, elements of which wanted to carry their pro-opposition, anti-P.A.P. fervour to a more racous climax. Jeyaretnam had to be quietly whisked away in order to defuse the situation."

Mr Jeyaretnam himself is aware of the potentials for violence within his Worker's Party. He told the same correspondent: "I am well aware of the serious danger that such a situation could get out of hand and we will try to prevent that happening." A confession that all he can do is try to prevent a dangerous situation from getting out of hand.

In the past when I had drawn attention to the attraction the Worker's Party had for men with a criminal past or propensity towards violence I was rebuked for commenting on the personal character of candidates instead of dwelling on their ideological beliefs - much in the spirit of Japanese politicians who wear white gloves during election campaigns to show that at least their hands are clean.

But if now, as Mr Jeyaretnam openly states, the intention of the Worker's Party is to take over Singapore from the P.A.P., presumably by constitutional means, then the personal character of the aspiring rulers becomes critically relevant.

Perhaps a measure of the seriousness with which Mr Jeyaretnam takes his role as saviour of Singapore from the P.A.P. tyranny is his handing down to the people of Singapore of what he termed his 10 Commandments at a mass meeting in Toa Payoh Stadium on 25 May.

The last occasion when a similar event took place was when Moses came down from the mountain bearing the tablets containing the much older version of the 10 Commandments. If Mr Jeyaretnam's dreams of replacing the P.A.P. Government are ever realised, it is not unreasonable to expect that Toa Payoh Stadium would be declared hallowed ground.

Mr Chiam too is now of the view that his election victory in Potong Pasir was really a mandate from Heaven that the people wanted an alternative government. This disclosure was made recently to a group of University students. I am curious about the thought processes which led him to the conclusion, and I quote him, that this was "a signal that the electorate wanted a change from the P.A.P." His party polled in all 32,100 votes as against the

568,300 or 1,100,000 voters (if you include uncontested seats) that the P.A.P. today represents in Parliament. This is the kind of thinking which I earlier described as "brilliant flashes of creative lunacy" on the part of Mr Chiam.

I have been unduly harsh with the two gentlemen not only to assert my right to hit back at them so long as they exercise their right to hit out at government but also in the hope that they will grow out of the karung-guni-man style of politics. This consists in belabouring in Parliament, day in and day out trivial and meaningless rag and bone issues. I believe both these gentlemen can rise above their present role of playing drain inspectors in Parliament if they set their minds to it.

In other words fun and games politics is all right for a while, but the time has now come for them to grow up simply because I believe that Singapore has entered its second battle for political and economic survival. There is no room today for fun and games politics, for inspired clowning in Parliament.

Now it is politics for real. Parliament should become a forum for educating our people, through high quality debates between government and opposition about today's political and economic realities. As it is the hashing and rehashing of rag and bone issues confuse and blind the people to the reality of second battle for survival they now confront. In a way this second battle for survival is going to be far more difficult and demanding than the first because Singapore's fate is now tied up with largely unmanageable global economic and political forces.

In a way the leaders now in charge of Singapore will have a harder time coping with this battle for survival than did the older generation of leaders. In the 60s and 70s the battle for survival was one of contending with domestic and regional threats. Moreover we had a population which, thanks to the endemic displays of Communist and communalist violence and assertions, needed no convincing that indeed they were engaged in a battle for survival. They had no time for fun and games politics; nor would they have gone along with Mr Chiam's recent assurance, and I quote him: "The meek inherits the world."

In the 60s and 70s the global economic system was in the process of unstoppable dynamic growth. All systems worked then - capitalism, feudalism, Communism, liberalism, democratic socialism, Asian socialism, Arab socialism, theocracies, autocracies - in fact anything and everything worked more or less.

Today no system is working and there is no evidence that any of them will. There is a breaking down everywhere of all aspects of society - from the political and economic to the social and cultural. And Singapore in common with all countries is caught in this tornado of a world crisis. That is why I do not see this crisis being fully resolved before the end of this century though I am convinced that out of the ruins of the old structure a new one will emerge. It has happened throughout human history. Singapore cannot prevent the collapse of the old structure but what it can and should do is to ride the storm, survive and come out whole and intact to thrive and progress when the sun returns as it must.

This is what real politics is all about - to help our people to survive the rising flood. The responsibility of political leaders committed to Singapore's survival,

whether from Government or from the opposition, is to make people aware that there is crisis and, more important, how they can successfully cope with it. This calls for real politics and if you want an example of it I refer you to Brig-General Lee Hsien Loong's speech which appeared in today's Straits Times. By way of contrast I also refer you to another report, also in today's Straits Times, about Mr Chiam's performance at a Singapore University forum on the "Future of Singapore". The quality of Mr Chiam's speech may be gauged from the fact that the chairman after lamenting the slow flow of questions from the floor, closed the forum. The only new intellectual breakthrough by Mr Chiam was a little bit of smear and sneer at the expense of Brig-General Lee. Mr Chiam who in an earlier forum had boasted about his humility (unarguably he has a great deal to be humble about) tried to raise a laugh at the Singapore University by referring to President Chiang Kai Shek appointing his son as Prime Minister.

So much for Mr Chiam's hand-rubbing simulation of humility and gentleness at public appearances.

And I suggest that you compare Brig-General Lee's thoughts on the future of Singapore with Mr Chiam's public wool gathering on the same subject at the University and decide whether the people of Potong Pasir or the people of Teck Ghee made the better choice to enhance Singapore's chances of survival. The day Mr Chiam makes a speech a quarter as illuminating as that by the man he made the object of a cheap jibe, then I would take a second look at Mr Chiam who now tries to ingratiate himself with people by playing the role of an amiable Goofy.

This hard hitting speech (since the soft approach of my over-optimistic colleagues has proved to be counter-productive) is really an appeal to the two opposition MPs

to grow up; to abandon fun and games politics. They could start of by abjuring the Politics of Envy in which they have been indulging to the point of tediousness and which by confusing certain sections of the population could make the second battle for survival unnecessarily difficult.

The politics of envy is the lowest form of politics. It makes for a despicable kind of human character. A theologian whose name has escaped me put well the degrading nature of envy. He makes his point through the story about Dives, the rich man, and Lazarus the poor after they die. Dives' torment in hell is inflicted by getting him to watch a happy Lazarus in the arms of Abraham in Heaven.

Lazarus' estacy, in turn, derives from watching Dives, whose wealth was a source of unbearable envy to Lazarus when alive, frying in the flames of hell.

I will give two recent instances of what the politics of envy can do to otherwise decent Singaporeans. The first was a reader's letter in the Straits Times a few days ago. The letters editor presumably thought this display of green envy sufficiently arresting to have it in black type. The writer after welcoming the discontinuance of air-conditioned buses (because the company found them unprofitable) then went on to give his own reasons for joy. He had always, he said, been angered that people should have been allowed to go about in air-conditioned buses just because they could afford to pay the higher fare while he, a poor man, had to sweat it out in a non-air conditioned bus.

He is now in ectasy because he can now watch the economically more fortunate sweating it out with him in a non-air conditioned bus.

The other was an article earlier this month by a journalist in the Straits Times. It was his response to the resale levy revision announced by Government earlier this month. I quote: "For months, after I took the most expensive step of my life and moved from Housing Board to private housing ... I refused to feel hurt ... I bore in silence the heavier burden of the bigger loan I had to take. I refused to feel regret until Monday when the HDB rules of resale were revised."

He then goes on to explain that he feels aggrieved because "those who temporised" were now reaping the reward that was denied him because he had moved to a better home too soon.

Like the man in the non-air conditioned bus this journalist was quite content so long as no one enjoyed a windfall by moving into private housing. But now like Dives to see others enjoy a stroke of good fortune denied him is the unbearable torment.

These are no admirable qualities and surely not the stuff out of which admirable Singaporeans will be made though human nature being what it is green envy will be a fact of life. Nevertheless it is not the business of politicians, whether from the Government side or from the opposition, to nurture and inflame such failings.

Both Mr. Jeyaretnam and Mr Chiam have, in moments of lucidity, quite properly complained about raw materialism. I have from time to time talked about the cult of moneytheism where I condemn not the making of money and the creation of wealth but the acquisition and spending of money in ways which degrade human character.

The politics of envy revolves around money, as the two instances I related illustrate, and generally result in the emergence of Ugly Singaporeans.

So I hope Parliamentarians on both sides of the House will make a fresh start by banning forever from the Chamber the politics of envy. It is a debasing sort of politics.

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