

16 MAY 1988

PRESS RELEASE

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Release No. 14/MAY
11-0/88/05/07

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

In its press statement of 28 April, the government warned that as the General Elections approach, it expects foreign groups to make further attempts to use Singaporeans as proxies to influence the domestic politics of Singapore.

Patrick Seong has since made a further statutory declaration (SD)¹ which shows that he was being cultivated by a foreign diplomat - E Mason ("Hank") Hendrickson, the First Secretary (Political) in the United States Embassy. Hendrickson had urged Patrick Seong and other lawyers to contest the elections against the government, and had involved himself in Singapore's domestic politics.

The Singapore Government has formally protested to the US Government at this violation of universal standards of proper diplomatic conduct. It has also arrested Francis Seow Tiang Siew, a 59-year-old lawyer, for further investigations.

Hendrickson Meets Lawyers

The first meeting between Hendrickson and Patrick Seong took place in May 87², with other lawyers present. Hendrickson sought their views on whether there would be a leadership tussle within the PAP when the Prime Minister retired.

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- 1 An extract from this SD is attached as an Annexe to this press statement. References to a senior US State Department official, who is named in the original SD, have been blanked out. The official is referred to as "Mr X" in this press statement.
 - 2 The SD only gives the date as 1987, without specifying the month. ISD has confirmed from other sources that the meeting took place in May.

Hendrickson Meets Patrick Seong Alone

In Jan 88, Hendrickson called Patrick Seong. Patrick Seong was taken by surprise, because he had never given Hendrickson his telephone number, and it had been several months since his first and only meeting with Hendrickson. Nevertheless, he agreed to meet Hendrickson again.

The two met alone. Hendrickson told Patrick Seong he was putting up a report on human rights in Singapore. However, he did not seem very interested in what Patrick Seong had to say on the detainees who were his clients. Hendrickson wanted to know whether General Elections would be held this year, the chances for the opposition in view of the Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) proposal, why the GRC concept was introduced, who the likely opposition candidates were, and Chiam See Tong's chances of being re-elected.

Patrick Seong's Suspicions

This meeting made Patrick Seong apprehensive about Hendrickson's real intentions in seeking him out. He knew that Hendrickson was trying to cultivate the friendship of lawyers. Teo Soh Lung had already told him she suspected that Hendrickson could be a CIA agent. Some time later, Patrick Seong asked Lisa Beyer (of Asiaweek) whether she thought Hendrickson was a CIA agent. Lisa Beyer replied that if everyone thought Hendrickson was a CIA agent he might in fact not be one, because he was adopting such a high profile.

Patrick Seong Meets Senior State Department Official

The third meeting between Patrick Seong and Hendrickson was in Mar 88. This was again initiated by Hendrickson, who asked Patrick Seong to bring some of his "like-minded friends" to meet a senior US State Department official, "Mr X"³.

3. His real name and title are given in the original SD.

Despite his suspicions about Hendrickson, Patrick Seong agreed to go, because he felt it would be good to have a contact in the US Embassy in case he should ever be arrested by ISD. He took the precaution of insisting that the meeting be held openly in a coffee house or restaurant, rather than in the private club suggested by Hendrickson. The meeting was arranged in the lounge of the Marina Mandarin hotel.

Patrick Seong invited Teo Soh Lung and Tang Lay Lee to the meeting. The two did not make it only because of miscommunication over the rendezvous. Only Patrick Seong met Hendrickson and Mr X.

Hendrickson Urges Lawyers to Contest

Hendrickson asked Patrick Seong about the detainees, whether the Marxist conspiracy would become an election issue, and whether GRCs would work to the disadvantage of the opposition. On the elections, Hendrickson asked why professionals were not coming forward to stand in the elections, and who were the lawyers who could be potential candidates. He also asked Patrick Seong whether he was standing for election himself. Patrick Seong replied that "Francis Seow had invited me to join him to stand for elections but that I was unlikely to stand. I said I valued my private life and that I was not cut out for public speaking."⁴

At this, Hendrickson came to the point of the meeting. He told Patrick Seong that lawyers would vote against the PAP, in view of the Law Society's experience with the Select Committee hearings on the Legal Profession (Amendment) Bill. He urged lawyers to contest the elections because they were disgruntled and were articulate and enjoyed a professional status. Mr X remained silent and did not contradict him.

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4 SD, para 29. In para 43 of the SD, Patrick Seong gave a further reason:

"I was apprehensive that the government would also discredit me if I associated myself politically with Francis Seow. I had heard about his affairs with women and that he was financially indebted. For example, there were talks in the Bar Room that his phone had been cut because he did not pay his phone bills."

This was not a casual remark. Hendrickson was giving Patrick Seong a serious message, in the presence of Mr X, his superior, after cultivating Patrick Seong for a year, at a meeting to which he had explicitly asked Patrick Seong to bring along other Singaporeans opposed to the government. Hendrickson's statement confirmed that the reason he had been cultivating Patrick Seong and others, ostensibly legitimately, was in fact to prepare the ground for such an approach. Hendrickson was clearly not just collecting information on Singapore politics. He was trying to manipulate and instigate Singaporeans, in order to bring about a particular political outcome.

Patrick Seong Resolves not to Meet Hendrickson

After this meeting, Patrick Seong became even more wary of Hendrickson, and decided that he would not want to meet Hendrickson any more. As he stated,

"I felt odd that Hank [Hendrickson] should have made so much effort to seek me out to arrange for me to meet [Mr X], who seemed to be a senior official. I was suspicious of his motives and did not want to be involved in something over which I did not have any control. He had shown a keen interest in my political intentions but I had made up my mind that I would not stand for elections."⁵

In other words, Patrick Seong knew that Hendrickson was trying to get him to enter politics, but he felt he was being manipulated and did not want to get entangled.

Other Contacts

The government knows from other sources that Patrick Seong is not the only one to have been approached by Hendrickson in this way. In Oct 86, Hendrickson introduced a State Department official, "Mr Y", to several Singaporean lawyers known to be critical of the government. They met at a lunch meeting arranged by Francis Seow at the Amara Hotel. Both Hendrickson and Mr Y expressed critical views about the Singapore Government, especially the way it conducted the Select Committee hearings on the Legal Profession (Amendment) Bill.

5 SD, para 41.

On another occasion, when one of Hendrickson's contacts told him that the opposition would need substantial finance in order to contest all seats in the coming General Elections, Hendrickson responded that surely money should not be a problem.

Diplomats Have No Right to Interfere

It is perfectly legitimate for Hendrickson to keep in touch with leaders of the constitutional opposition, as he has done with Chiam See Tong and J B Jeyaretnam, in order to analyse and understand Singapore politics. But Hendrickson also cultivated people who were not politicians but were known to be anti-government, like Francis Seow. Nor did he do so just to solicit their views on political issues in Singapore. Hendrickson had no business to arrange meetings with disaffected lawyers in order to attack the Singapore government, and instigate them to stand for elections against the government.

Diplomats in Singapore are free to meet anyone they please. But diplomats in Singapore, as in any other country, are under an obligation to remain neutral and objective observers of the countries to which they are accredited. If they are required to make representations on behalf of their own governments, they are expected to make them to the appropriate official authorities. They are expected not to interfere in the domestic politics of their countries of accreditation, whether by instigating or funding domestic political groups, never mind whether these are pro or anti-government.

As an experienced diplomat of 13 years' service, Hendrickson cannot but have known that he was acting most improperly and had breached diplomatic norms. His interference is all the more serious since he is the representative of a friendly country, and since two of his superiors - Mr X and Mr Y - one of whom was a very senior State Department official, knew and apparently approved of his activities.

Singapore Values US Ties

Singapore considers the US to be a good friend. It values the friendly and cordial ties it enjoys with the US. It wants to maintain and build upon that long-term

relationship. It does not want the transgressions and excesses of some bureaucrats to jeopardise this relationship. The Singapore government believes that the US also values its relationship with Singapore. It therefore hopes that Hendrickson's improprieties are not in any way supported or condoned by the US government.

Interference is Unacceptable

However, as a sovereign nation, Singapore cannot acquiesce in Hendrickson's continuing interference in Singapore's domestic politics. It is disturbing and dismaying that US diplomats have seen fit to act as if they were the colonial power and Singapore their protectorate.

Singapore Protests Formally

The Singapore Government has formally protested to the US Government at the activities of Hendrickson, and the apparent approval of these activities by Mr X and Mr Y. It has provided the US Government with the names of Mr X and Mr Y, but has withheld them from this press statement in order not to further embarrass the US. It has requested that the US Government withdraws Hendrickson, reprimands him, Mr X and Mr Y, and puts a stop to all such activities.

Francis Seow

ISD investigations into Hendrickson have revealed that he was in close contact with Francis Seow.

The government has been puzzled for some time as to why Francis Seow should suddenly have become a champion of human rights and opposition political causes. All his life he had been completely apolitical. This was so even after he became President of the Law Society in 1986. In Mar 86, when the Law Society submitted its views on the Newspapers and Printing Presses (Amendment) Bill to the government, the initiative was that of Teo Soh Lung, not Francis Seow.

Francis Seow was financially indebted. He owed large sums to banks for more than 10 years. His rents were in arrears, he had not paid CPF on his employees'

salaries, and he even left telephone bills unsettled. Then in Aug 86, he suddenly repaid a loan of \$350,000 owing to United Malayan Banking Corporation Berhad (UMBC). Since then, he has paid up other debts amounting to \$70,000. After being in debt for more than 10 years, his finances suddenly improved in 1986. How Francis Seow obtained the funds to settle his long overdue debts were unclear.

In Oct 86, Francis Seow gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Legal Profession (Amendment) Bill. Soon thereafter he developed an interest in politics. He began travelling overseas frequently. He spoke on human rights at regional conferences, and wrote letters on Singapore politics to regional newspapers and magazines. He tried to gather a group of lawyers to stand as independents in the next general elections. He claimed that he had the backing of the US State Department, and was a credible alternative to Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

The government has a duty to act under the Internal Security Act to counter subversion. In Singapore, subversion includes acting for foreign powers, whether Communist or Western. Francis Seow's actions strongly suggest that he is also involved in Hendrickson's activities. The government has therefore arrested Francis Seow to determine his place in the scheme that was being hatched.

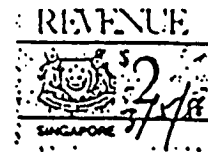
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
7 MAY 1983

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MHA/MAY7/Pgs.1-7

EXTRACTS FROM PATRICK SEONG'S STATUTORY
DECLARATION OF 3RD MAY 1988

(The blackened portions refer to Mr X)



THE STATUTORY DECLARATIONS ACT

(Chapter 320, 1985 Rev Ed)

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I..... SEONG KWOK KEI

NRIC/Passport No.0002934-C... Occupation Lawyer

Address Blk 558, Jurong West St 42, #04-445, Singapore 2264

do solemnly and sincerely declare that :-

I was very angry over the arrest of the 22 people in MAY and JUN 87. I knew a number of the arrestees personally and felt that they had been wrongly accused by the government. I wanted to internationalise the issue of the detentions so that pressure can be exerted on the government to release these detainees early. When I found that international publicity failed to move the government, I thought that by discrediting the government, the government's allegation of a conspiracy would be doubted. I also saw the detention of the 22 people could be an issue for the forthcoming general election.

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Seow
L.S.K.

21 In MAR 88 I received a telephone call from HANK HENDRICKSON, 1st Secretary of the US Embassy. He told me that one [REDACTED] would be coming to Singapore and would like to meet me and some of my like-minded friends. He suggested that the meeting be held at Pine Tree Club. I have met HANK twice before. I was suspicious of his motives and did not want to have the meeting at his private club. I told him that the venue suggested was not suitable to me because of transport problem. I suggested a coffee house or restaurant in town. Although I was uncomfortable about meeting HENDRICKSON I felt that it was good to have a contact in the US Embassy in case I should ever be arrested by ISD.

22 About 3 days later, HANK called and arranged for a meeting at Marina Mandarin lobby lounge at 5 pm one or 2 days later. I then contacted TEO SOH LUNG and TANG LAY LEE to invite them to go along. TEO SOH LUNG by then had given a BBC interview and I felt that she would be articulate in her views. Moreover she had told me of her own uneasiness over HENDRICKSON whom she once said could be a CIA agent and I wanted her to be present so that she could be there to alert me should there be any "funny" questions. Both TEO SOH LUNG and TANG LAY LEE agreed to meet me at the lobby of Marina Mandarin on the appointed day.

23 When I reached the lobby of Marina Mandarin, which was on the 3rd floor, I could not see TANG LAY LEE or TEO SOH LUNG. I spotted HANK HENDRICKSON and he brought me to a lounge seat where a Caucasian man was seated. He introduced that man to me as [REDACTED].

I asked [REDACTED] what his job entailed. He said that he keep in touch with the day to day development of this region.

24 I said that TEO SOH LUNG and TANG LAY LEE were supposed to turn up for this meeting but that they were not there yet. HANK then asked whether they were forbidden to attend this meeting. I said that I did not think so. HANK then said that he knew TEO SOH LUNG but he did not contact her after her release because he did not know how she felt. HANK then told [REDACTED] that I acted for some of the detainees. I then spoke on the detentions and said that the government's assertion that the detainees were not ill-treated was untrue. I said some detainees were ill-treated. I noticed HANK shaking his head. He then said that he had read of SOH LUNG's interview by the BBC and asked why these detainees who were ill-treated did not lodge police reports. I said that there was always fear of repercussions such as re-arrest. Furthermore, it was difficult for the detainees to prove their allegations. HANK wanted to know whether the Marxist conspiracy and

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allegations of ill-treatment would become an election issue. I replied that it would and that opposition parties would use this issue in their election campaign. I mentioned that the government's conspiracy theory appeared to be breaking up.

25 HANK felt that the government's successive re-election was due to the high economic growth experienced during the last few years by Singapore. He wanted to know whether the recent economic slow down would have an effect on the forthcoming election results. I replied that the government is likely to be returned to power and in view of the country's sizeable reserves it would have another 5 years to turn the economy around. HANK persisted and further asked what if at the end of that 5-year period the economy still does not pick up and whether that would then have an effect on the PAP's re-election. I said that even in that situation the PAP would still be returned to power in view of the lack of credible opposition to offer alternative solutions to the economic problems. I also said that Singaporeans were more concerned with material well-being and were not too concerned with ideals and human rights. They would still continue to vote for PAP if the goods are delivered.

26 HANK then asked whether the GRC would work to the disadvantage of the opposition. I believed he asked me this again for the benefit of ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ as he had posed this question to me before at our second meeting. I said that under the GRC, if the opposition could team up they could win 3 seats. If they were to contest in the single-seat constituencies their strength may be dissipated. However, I said that in view of the weak opposition it might not be possible for them to team up or field minority candidates.

27 ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ wanted to know why the opposition parties were so weak. I said that with the existing system, the opposition lacked credible candidates as the good ones had joined the PAP. There was also the fear of being sued for defamation which might be keeping potential candidates back. The opposition also did not have a strong research team to do in-depth study of issues and to analyse statistics so as to be able to debate effectively with the government. I also mentioned that the opposition did not have enough manpower to establish party branches to make known their activities and expand their influence.

28 HANK then asked why professionals were not coming forward to stand in the elections. I replied that FRANCIS SEOW had already made known his intention to stand for election. SOH LUNG had expressed interest before her arrest but after her release I did not know whether she had become dispirited.

Seow
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29 HANK was interested to know who were the lawyers who could be potential candidates. I told him that FRANCIS SEOW was trying to get a group of professionals to stand and that A.S.K WEE was one of them. HANK then asked whether I was standing for election myself. I told him that FRANCIS SEOW had invited me to join him to stand for elections but that I was unlikely to stand. I said that I valued my private life and that I was not cut out for public speaking.

30 HANK said that with the Law Society's recent experience with the government in the Select Committee hearing, lawyers would vote against the PAP. I replied that not all lawyers would vote against the PAP. HANK then said that the lawyers should contest the elections because they were disgruntled and were articulate and enjoyed a professional status.

31 HANK then looked at his watch and informed ~~me~~ that his dinner appointment was due. During the meeting HANK was doing most of the talking while ~~me~~ was relatively quiet and smiled once in a while.

32 About 2 days later I contacted SOH LUNG and LAY LEE and found out from them the reason for their absence. They said that they had waited at the ground floor lobby entrance of the hotel and left about half an hour later when they could not find me.

33 I first knew HANK HENDRICKSON in 1987. SUBHAS ANANDAN had asked me to join him and a few other lawyers to meet an American official from the Embassy who wanted to meet some lawyers for a discussion. I attended this meeting which was held in the 1819 Restaurant at Robinson Road but arrived late for the meeting and left early. The following lawyers were present : SUBHAS ANANDAN, EDWIN D'SOUZA, K BALACHANDRAN, JACQUELINE BARUCH, WEE PAN LEE and I think PETER MADHAVAN and MUZAMMIL as well. There was also another Caucasian man present who was purportedly from Washington. I cannot remember his name now.

34 When I arrived the discussion was already underway and I heard this Caucasian man saying that the ban against Singapore exporting guppy fishes to the USA was made under the US Wildlife Act. He said that it was a bureaucratic bungle in interpreting the Act to include guppies. He also said that it was a wrong impression to think that the departments in the USA were well coordinated.

Seow
LS

35 I cannot recall all that was discussed but at one point the discussion focussed on local politics. HANK wanted to know if there would be a tussle within the PAP over the premiership on PM's retirement. The opinions expressed were that there might be a contest within the PAP. I did not say anything much at this meeting.

36 The second time I met HANK HENDRICKSON was when he telephoned my office sometime in JAN 88. I do not know how he obtained my office telephone number as I did not give it to him. He identified himself as the First Secretary of the American Embassy and asked me whether I remembered him. I said that I was rather surprised by his call because the last time I met him was about a year ago. Anyway he asked to meet me to discuss "something". He did not elaborate and I presumed that he wanted to ask me about the detentions as I had acted for some of the detainees. I agreed to meet him. We arranged to meet at 4 pm on the same day in my office. I gave him my office address.

37 He came as arranged and we went to the coffee house Seabird Shoki on the 2nd level of International Plaza. HANK started off by saying that he was putting up a report on human rights in Singapore for the Congress or State Department. I then told him that I was the lawyer for 8 of the 22 detainees. I said that only one of my clients made representations to the Advisory Board but that she was not successful. I also said that I had heard that some of the detainees were ill-treated.

38 I noticed that HANK was not very attentive to what I had to say about the detention and the detainees. He appeared to be more interested in discussing other matters. He then asked whether the General Elections would be held this year and what I thought would be the chances of the opposition in view of the GRC. I told him that it was common knowledge that this would be an election year. I also said that the GRC could work both ways for the opposition. I stated that if the opposition contested in the GRC wards they could either win 3 seats or none at all. The GRC would work to the advantage of opposition candidates if they could come together. However, in view of the present state of the opposition they may have some problems fielding credible minority race candidates. He also asked my views on why the GRC concept was introduced. I told him that the official explanation, ie., to ensure minority representation in Parliament, was not genuine and that the scheme was actually introduced to make it more difficult for the opposition to field candidates. Although this concept would prevent a freak election result, it had the effect of perpetuating PAP rule.

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39 HANK also wanted to know who were the likely opposition candidates who would contest in the forthcoming election. I mentioned CHIAM SEE TONG, LING HOW DOONG, JUFRIE, FRANCIS SEOW and possibly TEO SOH LUNG. He asked about CHIAM's chances of being re-elected. I told him that although his performance in Parliament was not up to expectation, CHIAM could still be re-elected because of the desire of the people who wanted opposition in Parliament. This meeting lasted between 30-40 minutes. I would estimate that the discussion on the detainees' cases took up about one third of the time. The rest of the time was spent discussing the political scene.

40 I was disappointed that HANK did not show much interest when I spoke about the detainees. His views and questions on local political issues and his effort to seek me out even though we only met once nearly one year ago made me somewhat apprehensive about what he was up to. What SOH LUNG said before her arrest regarding HANK being a possible CIA agent was also in my mind. In fact after this second meeting, in one of my discussions with LISA BEYER, I told her about my meeting HANK and wondered what he was up to in asking questions on the local political scene. I knew that he was trying to cultivate the friendship of lawyers. I asked LISA BEYER whether HANK was a CIA agent. She offered the theory that if everyone thought that HANK was a CIA agent he might in fact not be one because he was adopting such a high profile. She said that there might be someone else in the Embassy who was a CIA agent.

41 As for the meeting in MAR 88, I did not want to meet him in his private club as I was doubtful of his motive and real identity. I wanted the meeting to be at a public place because I did not want it to be construed as a clandestine meeting with American Embassy officials. After this meeting in MAR, I decided that I did not want to meet HANK anymore. I felt odd that HANK should have made so much effort to seek me out to arrange for me to meet ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ who seemed to be a senior official. I was suspicious of his motives and did not want to be involved in something over which I did not have any control. He had shown a keen interest in my political intentions but I had made up my mind that I would not stand for elections.

42 In fact earlier, FRANCIS SEOW had over lunch told me that he was looking for a number of professionals to stand as a group of independents in the next general election. He asked me to be one of the independent candidates. I told him that I would consider but that I was not likely to stand as I was not good at public speaking and because I did not

Seow
L.S.

want to give up my private life. He persuaded me to consider seriously and said that public speaking was a matter of getting used to and knowing the subject matter before hand. He also asked me to recommend a Malay professional to join the group. He said that I had already shown myself to be interested in local issues and standing for election was just an extension of this interest.

43 When FRANCIS SEOW raised this matter of my standing for election, I was already firm in my mind against taking part but I did not tell him expressly so. I was apprehensive that the government would also discredit me if I associated myself politically with FRANCIS SEOW. I had heard about his affairs with women and that he was financially indebted. For example, there were talks in the Bar Room that his phone had been cut because he did not pay his phone bills.

and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions of the Statutory Declarations Act, 1835.

Seow

.....
(R.T.P./Signature of Declarant)

Declared before me at Singapore

Interpreted by

this 3rd day of May 1988
6.45 pm

ESL
MRS TEONG-GOH SIEW CHENG
Commissioner for Oaths

..... Judiciary, Singapore

Justice of the Peace, Notary Public or other
Officer empowered by law to administer
oaths, affirmations or affidavits.

