

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR, MR. JEK YEUN THONG, IN THE DEBATE ON THE PRIME MINISTER'S MOTION OF THANKS TO THE YANG DI-PERTUAN NEGARA FOR HIS ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1965.

The mentality of the Barisan Sosialis Opposition members is something extremely difficult to fathom. In their public manifestos and statements they are talking about their task to educate the people; to free the people from their ignorance so that they can build a new society over the ruins of the old. And yet, in practical life, with their inconsistent behaviours and their contradictory arguments, they are confusing the people more than anyone else.

On August 9 when we were compelled to take our independence, the Barisan Sosialis members were the first to demand an emergency meeting of this Assembly to debate on the separation. But we told them that there were other things more urgent than a debate in the Assembly. Our country must first gain admission into the United Nations. The United Nations was having a general assembly meeting in September. Our Ministers must be there to present the case on behalf of Singapore, otherwise, we would miss the occasion. So, we have to postpone our Assembly meeting so that the Deputy Prime Minister and two other Ministers could proceed to the United Nations to make an appearance and then to visit the Afro-Asian countries to win over their friendship and their recognition for our new country. Their achievements have been widely publicised in the Press and I do not wish to elaborate. There is no doubt that we have firmly established ourselves in the international field. Now, when the difficult task is over and when we are ready to have our Assembly meeting to conduct a full debate on independence and the manner in which Singapore was separated from Malaysia, we find the Opposition members missing. What kind of a situation is this? They were clamouring for the meeting and when we now let them have the meeting, they absent themselves from the meeting.

They were complaining that they were not given any opportunity to air the grievances of the people. They said the Press used to blackout their statements. They said radio was controlled by the Government. Very few Assembly

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meeting. And now, when we are having a full scale debate on the policy of the Government, they refuse to turn up to fulfil their duties as representatives of the people.

On the one hand, they denounce the independence of Singapore as a "phoney independence" and a British plot and on the other hand, they form a Committee of Relatives of Detained Persons and get Lim Chin Siong's father to sign a memorandum to the Prime Minister, claiming that Singapore having achieved independence, must release all the "patriots" who were arrested by the British during the colonial days.

At a time when the majority of the population wanted merger and Malaysia, the Barisan Socialis said they opposed to merger and Malaysia. They wanted a self-governing Singapore with control of internal security, which actually amounted to independence. Now, we have got independence, which is what they originally asked for and they turn round to say they do not want independence but they want a merger with Malaya. They call it a united Malaya (including Singapore). What kind of a political party is this that is always going against the majority wishes of the people?

They claim to be fighters for the cause of Chinese education. Yet, during the recent incident in the Nanyang University, their supporters beat up the Vice Chancellor of the University and set fire to the dormitory of a non-academic staff. They broke the equipment in the laboratory. They defaced the walls of the University with their ugly slogans. They even locked up professors in their houses in an attempt to prevent them from giving lectures. There was a case in which a teaching staff had to call for outside help to release him out of his house because his door-lock was tampered with in the night. By this and other underhand methods they were able to carry out their so-called boycott of classes for a few days. They finally had to give up the boycott because public opinion was not with them. But their activities have put shame to the name of Chinese education.

On the day before His Excellency opened this session, their leader Dr. Lee Siew Choh, announced that they were boycotting the session. But when reporters pointed out to him the danger that his Assemblymen may all lose their seats by doing so, he replied that he had to reconsider the matter. Even he is indecisive! Probably he has to wait for instructions from his underground masters or from his comrades in the Malayan National Liberation League in Indonesia, and instructions are not yet forthcoming, because his friends in the Malayan National Liberation League are now busy hiding away in Indonesia. Such is the indecisive and inconsistent opposition we are faced to-day. They are lost souls. They do not know where to go from here. And so, the only convenient way out of this dilemma for them appears to be absent from the House.

With this tremendous amount of split mentality and inconsistency on their part, it is small wonder that one of their leaders had to go to Woodbridge Hospital to seek specialist treatment. If this trend continues, many of them will have to follow the lead of their leader, and they will have to line up at the doorstep of Woodbridge Hospital. If that is the case, then the Minister for Health will have to seek more money from this House to provide for more V.I.P. wards to accommodate them!

They said in their statement they boycott this session because they did not want to lend credence to the "phoney independence" and help the P.A.P. Government to deceive the people. I do not believe this is the real reason. If that is true, why asked for a meeting in August? I think the real reason is that they have lost out on all fronts. They have lost in the Referendum, They have lost in the General Election. They have lost in the Hong Lim Bye Election. They have lost in every open argument. And further more their party is split and there is no unity between their trade unions and their party. Even their only hope, that the P.K.I. may come and rescue them, had vanished with the coup and counter coup on September 30th in Indonesia.

In August, the Barisan demanded an emergency meeting. To-day, four months later, they refuse to come to the meeting. The only difference between to-day and four months ago is that in August the P.K.I. was at the peak of its influence in Indonesia, and to-day the P.K.I. is down and out and their friends in the Malayan National Liberation League are in hiding. So, the Barisan decided to boycott the meeting because they cannot echo the voice of their masters anymore because their masters are nowhere to be found.

I wish to touch on the question of survival which was very much emphasised by His Excellency's address. The obstructive forces which work against the progress of our society stem from two sources. First the Communists in our own country and second the Feudalists across the Causeway. We sought to join Malaysia for greater prosperity and security which a small island like us would not be able to achieve. But we were very soon disillusioned. Our big brother over the Causeway turned out to be not so brotherly. During the two years we were in Malaysia, instead of helping us with their vast resources and potentiality of their market to hasten our industrialisation programmes, they looted and plundered us. For two years they have been taking away 40 per cent of our Federal revenues plus our share of the profit in the Currency Board but not one item of Development project was carried out in Singapore.

Promises they had made before Malaysia were never carried out after we had joined Malaysia. For instance, they promised to let us have autonomy on Labour and Education.

This was guaranteed in the Malaysian Constitution. But at the slightest pretext, they tried to snatch away our autonomous power on Labour by proclaiming a ban on strikes under the Emergency powers and this was to include Singapore.

There is another example. It was agreed before we joined Malaysia that for the Singapore component of the Malaysian Police Force, recruitments, whether Malays or otherwise, must be from Singapore citizens. It was only fair because jobs in Singapore must be given to Singapore citizens. But after we were independent, we were shocked to learn that for the new recruits in the Singapore Police since Malaysia Day, the majority of them came from the Federation. They were using Singapore as a convenient dumping place for their unemployed.

We are not going to allow them to do this anymore. At a subsequent meeting, I will introduce to this House a bill to provide for the issue of work permits to non-citizens. The Member for Bras Basah yesterday appealed to the Government to be lenient in the

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issue of work permits. I do wish we could be rich enough to allow our neighbours and brothers over the causeway to share our prosperity. But members must realise that our rice bowl is barely enough for our 1.9 million to 2 million population. If more people come in to share the rice bowl, the benefit of our own people will be jeopardised. If we allow more and more people/<sup>to</sup>try to jump into our small boat because life in the Federation is miserable, then our small boat may sink and our own lives may start to become as miserable as theirs in the Federation.

What we are now telling our brothers over the causeway is this: Don't take Singapore as your escape route from your present day problems. That is no solution. If you feel you should have a better society and a better government like Singapore, then you must stay put in your own place and rally more people to fight for such a goal. If you try hard enough then one day the whole of the feudalistic society will collapse and a more just and equal multi-racial society will emerge. Then the people in the two countries which are separated by artificial means will be one again.

The Federation is determined not to allow us to prosper. On this basis we must seek our own survival. We do not have to depend on the Federation for our living. But we must warn them not to block us from seeking our living elsewhere. Trading with any country of the world is our sovereign right and I hope the Federation Government would not interfere in our internal affairs. They do not want to trade with us and deny us their market, that is their business. We cannot complain. But don't stop us from carrying out legitimate trade with other countries under any pretext.

(TO BE CONTINUED TOMORROW, DEC.16)

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