

SPEECH BY INCHE OTHMAN WOK, MINISTER
FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AT THE INTER-BRANCH
DEBATE OF THE P.A.P. AT THE CULTURAL
CENTRE ON 28.6.69 AT 7.30 P.M.

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The Inter-Branch Debate tonight is one of the preliminary functions to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the foundation of our Party. While we are fifteen years old, modern Singapore is 150 years old. In this important year we are both proud and humble. We are proud that after 10 years of political power in this country we are stronger than ever, having built our Party on the foundations of justice, hardwork, integrity and honour. While politicians elsewhere merely pay lip-service to their declarations at election time and forget about the promises after being elected, we on the other hand, more than fulfil our promises. However, this is neither the time nor occasion to boast off our achievements either material or non-material. What is important is that our Party stands for something that alone makes civilized life possible in this part of the world. I refer to the true multi-racialism of the People's Action Party. Look around you in the whole of South East Asia today and tell me whether it is true or not that Singapore today alone is a country where man respect man, where the evil of racialism is smashed downward, where justice is given irrespective of custom, race or religion. A new society has been created in this turbulent region, and we are looked upon as a shining example of social and racial justice.

Pride, however, is insufficient because if a political Party becomes proud, it is taking the first step towards disaster. As I have said at the beginning, we should be humble. In our humility, we can see things in the right perspective. One of the things we want to practise is constant vigilance. The People's Action Party must never allow any of its members, or any of its committees, to lose control of the Party ideals. In the midst of our celebrations this year, we

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must strengthen our resolutions to achieve a better and better Singapore society based on social justice and social discipline. Our achievements must give us this determination to do better in the days ahead of us. We want to recruit men and women of stamina and character into our Party ranks. We want to re-train our old members in political philosophy. We want to plan, and we want to implement our avowed policies. That is why I consider that our present Inter-Branch Debate conducted in the National Language, Chinese and English as very useful. A good debate teaches us how to marshall our thoughts and ideas, how to present them clearly and logically, how to persuade others and win them over to our side. I would say therefore that debating is a most useful exercise for our party members. In political life, a good speaker is one who can get to the top. It is useless to have good ideas and yet be unable to express them effectively. In a democracy, public speaking is a vital art. Therefore, I wish to congratulate all the organisers and participants in this Inter-Branch Debate.

In the years ahead we need all the talent in the Party. No part of the world is more subjected to rapid changes than South East Asia and in the years ahead, our Party will play a great international role. It will take over the leadership of South East Asia not through brute force, not by battalions of soldiers, not by navies of ships, not by squadrons of airplanes. It will assume leadership quality. From political quality we go on to economic and social quality. That is the task that faces the ruling Singapore political party and I call upon all of you in our Party to be prepared for the days ahead of us and be united in one brotherhood based not on hatred but on mutual respect, not on racial tradition but on racial unity. Not on discrimination

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but on true equality. The days ahead will also belong to the younger generation. We need young talent to take over what we have achieved. But if the torch is to be passed from the older hand to the younger hand, the younger hand must be equally strong to receive the torch.

May I, in conclusion, wish you all the success in this Inter-Branch Debate. May this function serve as an indicator of similar functions in the future.

Comrades, it gives me pleasure to declare open the Inter-Branch Debate of the People's Action Party.

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