

EMBARGOED TILL AFTER DELIVERY

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Speech by Prof. Wong Lin Ken, Minister for Home Affairs,  
at opening of "Police Week" at Victoria Theatre on  
Thursday, 3rd June 1971 at 11 a.m.

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To-day is the 3rd of June. It has been designated Police Day. 3rd of June has special significance. Twelve years ago, on this date, we obtained self-government. The Police came under the control of our first Minister for Home Affairs. The milieu in which the Police had to operate changed fundamentally. Previously, it was entirely responsible to an alien government. It was military in origin, and it imposed the will of an alien government. It could function apart from the people. On 3rd June, 1959, the Police became accountable to the people, through a Minister, responsible to an elected Assembly. It could no longer function apart from the community: it had to be part and parcel of the society. In the course of the last 12 years, the Police has successfully re-orientated itself as the law enforcement agency of an elected government.

We are now an independent Republic. The Government has designated 3rd of June to be Police Day, to re-affirm the fact that the Police is part of our society, responsible to an elected government, and the maintenance of law and order is a service to the community. Police Day will henceforth be commemorated every year, on the 3rd day of June.

On this date, it is appropriate to re-affirm that the Police Force is dedicated to the maintenance of law and order in a multi-racial society. The law will be imposed and seen to

be imposed, with impartiality, irrespective of race, religion, language, and culture. Impartial maintenance of law and order is essential to the successful evolution of our nation of many races, religions, languages, and cultures.

Police Day is followed by Police Week. It is generally accepted that the Police can only function effectively if it has public support and co-operation. The reason for Police Week is to develop further community relations between members of the Force and the Public. The Police and the Public have common interests in developing a climate of opinion and mutual co-operation to make sure that in our Republic crime does not pay.

The prevention of crime is not entirely a Police responsibility. It must be a community effort. First, there must be a climate of opinion that crime does not pay. We have such a climate of opinion in our country. Second, there must be a sense of civic responsibility. The public must come forward with information, and as witnesses, even if this is accompanied by some personal inconvenience.

About a few weeks ago, I was informed that a man was caught molesting a woman. But the woman did not want the Police to be involved, for reasons best known to herself. Later, the man's friends went to her house, and threatened her with unpleasant consequences, if she took any action that would lead to the man's dismissal by his employer. So, a sexual offender is on the loose, because the principal witness and victim, was not willing to come forward. And a threat hangs over her head.

She has done society an injustice, and justice cannot be done.  
The Police is made ineffective in such circumstances.

Thirdly, there must be a high standard of ethics among politicians, lawyers, and accountants. There are countries where such people are in the pay of criminal organisations. They advise gangsters how far they can go and still keep within the law. These gangsters can exert political pressure at the right places through politicians in their pay. The Mafia, for example, operates in this way. Fortunately, in our Republic, our professional people have a high standard of ethics. But we have had occasions when some political parties resorted to the use of secret societies during election time.

Lastly, the public must provide a climate of opinion against those who bribe the Police in order to get things done. The law on corrupt practices punishes those who are caught taking bribes or giving them. But there is a double standard of public morality in bribery cases. If policemen are caught for receiving bribes, their guilt is often collectively laid on the Police. There is public censure. This is not without some benefit, for it provides a healthy public opinion, to ensure honest policing. But those caught bribing the Police escape public comment. If the public wants a clean Police Force, it must also provide a climate of opinion in which the bribers and the bribed receive the same degree of social disapproval.

By and large, we are in a law abiding society. Indeed, we place great value on the efficient maintenance of law and order.

The public has a right to demand efficient policing, for it ultimately foots the bill. It expects the same standard of efficiency of the Police as of any other government department.

Good public relation is an essential aspect of police work. The public cannot be unjustly or rudely treated. This is particularly true in offences of a non-criminal character. Since the Police makes more public contacts in controlling traffic than in any other activity, the Traffic Division has been specifically instructed to be courteous towards traffic offenders. Furthermore, the traffic police has been given instructions on courteous behaviour. A code of conduct for the Police has just been drawn up, and courtesy in dealing with the public has been written into it.

In this Police Week, both the Police and the Public are asked to re-affirm that policing is a service to the community. A Policeman's job is not an easy one. When there is law and order, his contribution is taken for granted, and not even noticed. When he exercises his authority, he is liable to be criticized. Like every occupation, there are good policemen, and bad policemen. By and large, we have a reasonably good Police Force. Public support and co-operation are essential to effective policing. The Police wants to provide efficient policing, and the Public has a right to demand it. This can only be achieved, if it is recognised, amongst other factors, that the maintenance of law and order is a community responsibility.

It is my pleasure now, to declare open Police Week 1971.

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2nd June, 1971.

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