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SPEECH BY MR CHAI CHONG YII, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BUKIT BATOK
AND SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, AT THE NATIONAL DAY
CELEBRATION DINNER ON SATURDAY, 12 AUGUST 1978 AT 8.00 P.M.
AT THE CAR PARK OF BUKIT BATOK HOUSING ESTATE

It is indeed a joyous occasion for us to be celebrating our National Day. However, in the midst of our celebration, it might prove a useful exercise for each of us to do an annual balancing of the private account we have with our country. The question everyone of us must ask ourselves is: "Have we put in more than we have drawn out as far as the national good is concerned?"

History has shown that the greatness of nations depends largely on the quality and efforts of the people. Of course the ultimate destiny of nations could not escape the inevitable cycle of rise and fall. Human effort cannot avert the working out of natural law, but it can substantially affect its course. By not yielding to the temptation to slacken the effort and enjoy the fruits of one's labour, the people can collectively sustain and prolong the upward movement and thus hold off the downward swing.

The same could be applied to the life cycle of an individual. People work hard when they are young and relatively poor. But as soon as they have gathered some wealth, they tend to take things easy and luxuriate in ease and comfort. Such an attitude would be dangerous, in fact fatal, in a nation like ours which depends entirely on its people's discipline, thrift and indomitable will to work hard. Soft options like shorter working hours, longer vacations and earlier retirement are strictly alien notions propagated by wealthy nations for their own consumption.

Equally alien to our Eastern tradition are lavish habits of spending first and paying later and an ostentatious life style fostered by our own growing affluence and constantly abetted by

advertising. In the race for conspicuous consumption, thrift has become unfashionable and any form of accumulation of wealth is even frowned upon. Must we be ruled totally by the value system of a capitalistic economy patterned on the West?

Displaying one's wealth betrays an innate lack of good taste. We must continue and strengthen the tradition of making private donations in a worthy cause. Community development is a joint responsibility and the new community centre for our Duit Batak constituency needs a sum of eight hundred thousand dollars. We must put in more individual and collective efforts, not only in terms of cash donations but also in spirit, energy and time.

Let us not take for granted the security and protection which the State provides for us. It is not enough for the citizenry merely to be law-abiding and to pay the taxes. We owe to the State a reciprocation, a repaying of our indebtedness. This debt we can discharge by looking beyond our personal interests and contributing to the total welfare and common good of the whole nation. Then, and only then, can our Republic continue to flourish in peace, harmony and prosperity.

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