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SPEECH BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE HON SUI SEN MEMORIAL LIBRARY AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
OF SINGAPORE, ON FRIDAY, 15 JANUARY 1988 AT 5.00 PM

EVOLVING A DOCTRINE OF GOVERNMENT
SUITABLE FOR SINGAPORE

This auditorium is part of a building that stands in memory of an outstanding Singaporean. Mr Hon Sui Sen passed away unexpectedly on 14 October 1983, at the age of 67. He was then the Finance Minister and Member of Parliament for Havelock. His life was spent in public service, first as a civil servant, then in Government-owned companies after his retirement, and thereafter as a Minister and Member of Parliament. Soon after he died, senior civil servants and community leaders of the former Havelock Constituency got together to start a fund for the Hon Sui Sen Memorial Library. They were close to him and they respected him. It was a spontaneous gesture to do something to remember a man they had worked for and worked with.

Remembering Mr Hon Sui Sen

This Memorial Library is a fitting way to remember Mr Hon. Mr Hon loved books, particularly books on management. It is doubly fitting that the Library is a resource centre for both the NUS School of Postgraduate Management Studies and the Faculty of Business Administration.

Construction of the Library began in October 1984 and was completed in January 1987. The Government contributed \$7 million for the building. Foundations, corporations and members of the public, have so far contributed \$6.3 million. With pledges made earlier of an additional \$0.5 million, the Hon Sui Sen Memorial Library Fund now stands at \$6.8 million. I congratulate the Fund Raising Committee for having raised so much money in so short a time, particularly when it coincided with the 1985-86 recession, a time when many companies were badly hit. Money from the fund goes towards the acquisition of books and other resources for the Library.

The warm, spontaneous and generous donations speak well for the personal side of the late Mr Hon. He was more than just a valued member of the Government. To many of us he was a friend who guided us in our work, as though we were part of his family.

He helped to set up and successfully launched many of today's major corporations in Singapore. Many chief executives of government-linked corporations and statutory boards, and several senior civil servants and younger Ministers learnt from working closely with him.

His quiet style left a firm imprint on government administration. His philosophy of public administration, ideas and methods of management, live on in the day-to-day administrative process.

Lessons From Early Struggles

Mr Hon belonged to the first generation of Singapore leaders who shaped Singapore's destiny - from a British colony, to self-government, to independence as part of Malaysia and independence on its own. They have brought about today's thriving and vibrant Singapore. Through their experiences, they have evolved a doctrine of government relevant and unique to Singapore.

Their experiences hold important lessons for present and future generations of Singaporeans. We can learn from their experiences, avoid their mistakes, imbibe their values, and build on their doctrine of government to serve us in our own time.

Whilst most of the first generation leaders are still with us, living healthy lives, we should ask them to share their experiences of building a nation from scratch with us in person. Those of us who have not personally gone through the struggling years but are enjoying their fruits, have a responsibility to learn how the fruits came about. A good knowledge of the political history of Singapore, and the reasons for our survival as a nation, can help us in turn to keep the country flourishing for the next generation.

Institute of Policy Studies

It is for this purpose that the Government has supported the setting up of a new Institute of Policy Studies. As this Institute will be housed in the Hon Sui Sen Memorial Library, it is appropriate for me to announce its establishment today. The Institute will have two major roles. Apart from imparting to the younger Singaporeans in public administration and managerial positions in the private sector, a good knowledge of Singapore's history, it will also provide a forum to stimulate lively discussions on Singapore's future.

Younger Singaporeans want to play a role in shaping Singapore's destiny. This is healthy. We should encourage it. There is at present no regular forum for them to go to if they want to contribute their ideas, or to express their dissenting views. The Institute will provide a regular forum for them. They can brainstorm their ideas freely, frankly and without fear. It is a place where they can disagree agreeably.

The Institute will also undertake research studies.

Properly run, the Institute will provide a valuable input into the decision-making process of Government thinking. In this respect, it will not be unlike the think tanks in other countries such as the Brookings Institution and Heritage Foundation in the United States.

Many major US corporations such as IBM and Hewlett-Packard send their senior executives to attend lectures and seminars on international and US policy issues at these institutions on a regular basis. For a start, the Institute of Policy Studies will conduct lectures on the history and politics of Singapore for senior civil servants. This will be extended to senior executives in the private sector at a later date. The Institute of Policy Studies should set for itself the target of developing into a think tank of the stature of the better-known American institutions.

Board of Governors

The Institute will have an independent Board of Governors, comprising civil servants, senior executives of private corporations, and members of the academia. The Board will decide how the Institute is to be run to meet its stated objectives.

Funds

The Institute is expected to be self-funding. The Government will provide a grant of \$4 million to start it off. But this will not be enough for a good Institute. The Board of Governors will have to raise additional funds. This method of funding will ensure autonomy for the Institute, and at the same time, test it in the marketplace.

Location

The Institute is located adjacent to the National University of Singapore for a good reason. It will draw on the university's staff and library facilities. It will be linked to the university, yet independent of it.

Excellence in Public Administration

The choice of the Hon Sui Sen Memorial Library to house the Institute is deliberate. The late Mr Hon stood for excellence in public administration. The Institute of Policy Studies will help, through research studies, seminars, forum discussions and lectures, to evolve a doctrine of government which will enable future generations of Singaporeans to achieve that excellence in public administration.

Mrs Hon

We are particularly pleased to have with us today Mrs Hon and members of her family. Mrs Hon laid the foundation stone for the Library on 5 October '84, and it is fitting that she should be the first to visit the Library built in memory of her husband.

It is with great pleasure that I now unveil the plaque and declare the Hon Sui Sen Memorial Library open.

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