

SPEECH BY MR. LIM CHEE ONN, M.P. FOR BUKIT MERAH,
AT THE 12TH NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS HELD AT BUKIT
MERAH COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SUNDAY, 21 AUGUST 1977 AT
8.00 P.M.

DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT - THE KEYS TO OUR CONTINUED PROGRESS

DO NOT ASK WHAT SINGAPORE CAN DO FOR YOU

It is perhaps fitting to call to mind on the occasion of our National Day Celebrations, the words of John F. Kennedy when he was inaugurated President of the United States. He exhorted the American people to ask not what their country could do for them but what they, the people, could do for their country.

We would do well to constantly remind ourselves of these words of John Kennedy. As our nation becomes more affluent, we are inclined to forget our individual roles and responsibilities as citizens of Singapore. We tend to overlook that there is a need for each of us to contribute towards building and maintaining a stable and prosperous nation.

Our continued progress and ability to survive hard times ahead depend very largely on how seriously we take these responsibilities. Unfortunately, some people especially the younger members of our society, take a lot of things for granted because of the peace, progress and prosperity we have been fortunate enough to enjoy for the past 12 years. Such complacency if not corrected, could lead to a weakening of our national spirit and will to survive.

DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT - KEYS TO OUR FUTURE PROGRESS

All that we have today is a result of hard work by the people of Singapore guided by the realistic outlook and practical policies of the Government. It is this spirit of dedication that has enabled us to overcome the many crises that we have encountered as a young nation. If we are **not** to succumb to the difficulties that lie ahead, it is imperative that we retain and strengthen this national spirit of dedication. At the same time, we should also build up a strong sense of commitment and responsibility in our younger citizens.

It is not by chance or just good fortune that we in Singapore have a country of which we can all be proud. It would be most foolhardy for us to throw everything away through slackening of our will and weakening of our spirit. In fact, we must not allow this to occur.

OUR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We should do all we can to avoid adopting attitudes which are detrimental to our nation's continued well-being. Attitudes such as complacency, lack of commitment, and the "I-am-all-right-Jack" brand of self-interest work against our efforts to promote civic consciousness and to encourage our citizens to work for the common good.

Instead we should be ever mindful of our roles and responsibilities as citizens to our nation. Each of us has a part to play, be it in school, on the shop floor, in the office or at home.

The major industrial countries have taken steps to overcome their problems of unemployment, high inflation rates, excess production capacity and rising expectations amongst their people. We, in Singapore, are affected by these measures whether we like it or not. What we can and must do, is to improve our capacity to compete for investments and markets.

At the same time, we Singaporeans should resist the apparent attractions of the soft life as portrayed by the more affluent countries and avoid following blindly the life styles and value systems of the West. We must exercise more discipline and self-restraint in our living and working habits, and temper our expectations. It would be disastrous for us to become infected by the disease which demands more pay and less work. Some well-developed economies in other parts of the world have already been brought to the brink of collapse by the ravages of this disease. It would take a very much shorter time to bring Singapore's youthful economy to ruin through the same affliction.

We should take a realistic and clear-headed view of our future. At the outset we must be clear in our minds regarding Singapore's position in relation to the world economic situation. Then we shall be better equipped to exploit the opportunities and overcome the difficulties which lie ahead. Our future will depend on how we respond.

If we take the second question of John F. Kennedy to heart and ask ourselves what we can do for our country, what contribution we can make to our nation's well-being, we shall find that the first question will take care of itself. For how satisfactory an answer we get the first depends on how effectively we can answer the second. We should never forget that it is only when there is peace, progress and prosperity in our nation that we can share the fruits of its economic growth.
