

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel. 3378191 ext. 352,353,354/3362207/3362271

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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOON CHOY, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), AT THE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS
AT LORONG LIEW LIAN CAR PARK ON SUNDAY, 8 AUGUST 1982 AT 8 PM

The same night 17 years ago when Singapore was separated from Malaysia, we were worried and perturbed. How could Singapore survive without natural resources of any kind. Some political pundits had predicted that we would crawl back to Malaysia within two years for they thought that Singapore alone was economically unviable. There was widespread unemployment and schools and social amenities were scarce. But we were able to turn the tide. Year by year, Singapore's economy became stronger and stronger. We have prospered. We happened to be the very rare country in the world which has experienced full employment as the world depression has affected even the wealthiest country. The United States, which is one of the richest countries in the world, had 10.1 million people unemployed in the first three months of this year. During the same period, Britain and France had 2.9 million and two million unemployed respectively. Communist countries which have nationalised all industries and claim to be working for the workers, are also suffering from massive unemployment and other serious problems affecting the livelihood of the people.

We had been able to provide full employment and continue to prosper because we are able to make full use of our manpower resources, and to make good use of our geographical position as a centre of entrepot, finance, communication, technical training and medical care. We depended on human resources - the most valuable resource at our disposal. We are able to see what is ahead of us and started to train Singaporeans to cope with the advancement of science and technology. We work on the basis that nobody owes us a living and every one must work in order to live. Unlike some European countries, we do not provide unemployment

benefit and2/-

benefit to those who do not work. Many European countries are bogged down with economic and financial problems because too many idle hands are being paid for doing nothing. There is a Chinese saying that even a mountain will collapse if many people sit and eat.

As a result of their economic problems, many rich European countries are trying to solve their problems of unemployment by controlling the import of products from countries like Singapore. This trend of protectionism is affecting our economy. We must work hard and upgrade our skills in order to maintain our prosperity. Owing to the shortage of labour, some of our factories are seriously considering the use of robots to replace manpower.

Whilst improving our technological skills, let us not forget our Eastern cultural roots. The attempt to infuse the good and relevant virtues of Confucius teachings is an exercise to remind our people of our own traditional values of life.

While we modernise, we do not want to be Westernised. We can be technological advanced and yet remain Eastern in our spiritual approach to life.

In 10 years' time, I hope Singapore will continue to progress in Western technology and will by then have laid a foundation for our traditional way of life according to Confucius and other religious teachings.
