

8TH OCTOBER 1958

SPEECH BY MR LEE KUAN YEW ON THE PRESERVATION OF PUBLIC
SECURITY ORDINANCE (P.P.S.O.)

INTRODUCTION

We welcome the form in which the extension to the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance is being sought, this amendment to extend it from 3 to 4 years - one extra year to cover the life of the Labour Front Government.

It makes it easier for us to state our position clearly and simply. 3½ years ago the P.A.P. fought and won 3 out of the 4 seats it contested. One of its promises was to oppose the Emergency Regulations. Six months after that when the former leader of the Government Mr. Marshall tried a sleight of hand, bringing in the Preservation of Public Security Ordinance with his right, as he threw out the Emergency Regulations with his left, we opposed it. There is nothing since September 1955 that has changed our position and to-day we still oppose it.

THE MANDATE

We were elected on an election promise to oppose, and we honour our promise. It is fundamental to the working of the democratic system that important issues are placed before the people by all those contesting elections for a mandate to be given them. And whoever is returned to represent the people are expected to implement faithfully the mandate that has been given them. This is the essence of the democratic system. If there is to be a departure from any fundamental election pledge, then the mandate must be returned to the people, and a new mandate sought.

It is true that this is not required by the law. By the law whoever wins an election can do whatever he pleases for his term. But the law does require him to vacate his seat at the end of his term and seek re-election if he desires to continue.

When that time comes, they who have forgotten what they have promised the people on the previous occasion, will discover that the people place very little reliance on their promises.

SECRET OF LONG LIFE

The secret of long life in politics is not the continual formation, dissolution, and reformation of parties, fronts or movements. It is only the dissolute and the debauched who become prematurely aged, and go in search for that secret elixir of life that will bring back to them their lost youth. And so it is that some people believe that having debauched themselves in one political party they can like the phoenix, rise anew and afresh from the ashes of the old bird in the feathers of the new phoenix called sometimes "a front", sometimes, "a party", sometimes "a movement".

But in fact there is no magic formula for long life in politics - other than the simple and the obvious. Just honour your promises, do not corrupt and debauch your party and you will find that the people believe you, when you go back to ask them to renew the mandate. It is as simple as that.

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II WHAT P.A.P. PROPOSE TO DO IN NEXT ELECTIONS

But what then you may ask does the P.A.P. propose to do in the next elections. Is it going to repeat the same anti Emergency Regulations stand? Is it going to make it an election issue, and then having won abolish these Emergency Regulations or Preservation of Public Security Ordinance as it is now called. Under normal circumstances I would tell the curious and the news hawks to wait till our election programme is issued in a few months' time. But it may be that the Government of the Federation is anxious to know what is its position vis-a-vis Singapore, after the general elections. The Federation is to be represented in the Internal Security Council of Singapore under the new Constitution, and in fact will have the decisive vote. What is to happen to the Emergency laws? Is there to be a crisis immediately after the next Government of Singapore is sworn in and an emergency meeting of the Internal Security Council summoned? Is the Federation to vote with the British representatives against the Singapore representatives and prevent the Emergency laws from being repealed? Or is it to vote with the Singapore representatives and allow these laws to be repealed? To vote with the British against the Singapore representatives may be politically embarrassing for the Federation. To vote with the Singapore representatives for the abolition of Emergency laws which the Federation still finds necessary may be even more politically embarrassing. So they may be tempted to abstain. But to abstain will mean deadlock, and perhaps bring about the end of the new Constitution in Singapore.

It is because the Federation Government is deeply concerned with the issue that my party has decided to state its position now in unequivocal terms.

NO - THREE YEARS AGO

If it were the British Government in control of the Federation of Malaya as it was three years ago, we will still oppose the Emergency laws as vehemently as we then did. That was a period when these Emergency laws were used by the colonial power not only to curb the Communist, but also the militant nationalist. It was a simple issue of the people versus British imperialism.

So when we were asked to vote these powers for a Government in Singapore we opposed. For the centre of power of that Government was and is in the triumvirate of the Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary and the Attorney General, headed by a Governor with over-riding powers. These men were not answerable to the people. Their masters are in London not in the people of Singapore.

In that situation we allied ourselves with all the anti-colonial forces to fight colonialism. And we will continue to do so until the last vestiges of colonial rule is removed.

THE NEW PHASE POST MERDEKA

Now however, partly as a result of British scheming, and partly because of the accidents of history, we are faced with a separate and independent Federation of Malaya, with no immediate prospects of our becoming independent. Next year we are only to become internally self-governing. And in all security matters which affect defence upon which the Singapore Government disagrees with the British Government, the Federation is to be arbiter. We accepted that position because we accept merger as the road to independence. If we are prepared to join the Federation as a state, then it means that the other states in the Federation in any case control our destiny.

That is still our position. And indeed it is the position for all the years to come before merger. We recognise that our overriding objective is merger and so acknowledge that until merger the over riding interests of the Federation must prevail over Singapore. Therefore we say that if we are the Government of Singapore, we shall take no steps which would undermine the interests of the Federation.

As a party of the "left" we may not see things in the same light as "a party of the right" as the Tunku has called U.M.N.O. in the Federation. But we can assure them that their views and susceptibilities will always be given the greatest consideration.

OUR STAND

On this question of Emergency laws our stand is this: as long as they are necessary for the maintenance of security in the Federation so long will they be necessary for Singapore.

We state this now in the knowledge that there will be political bankrupts and charlatans who will make promises to abolish them at the next elections. We have met such types before and expect to meet them again in the future. When the time comes we shall justify our view and our stand, that there can be no abolition of the Emergency laws in Singapore until they have been abolished in the Federation. And those who want the Emergency laws abolished in Singapore should try to help establish conditions of peace and security in the Federation so that they may no longer be required.

IMPOSSIBLE TO ABOLISH

Before these conditions have been brought about, any one who promises to abolish these powers is over-looking the inter-dependence of the two territories. Singapore cannot be turned into a rest camp or a base for the M.C.P. for their operations on the mainland. And those who promise to abolish the Emergency laws in Singapore will succeed not in abolishing them but in either creating a constitutional deadlock, or in antagonising the Federation into voting with the British representatives in the Security Council.

And "intelligent" persons who knowing this, yet promise abolition are just plain liars and cheats and we shall expose them at the next elections.

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OTHER EMERGENT NATIONS

We have to face up the new situation before us. Our position is not new or unique in the history of the world. All colonial territories that have gained their independence since the end of World War II have equipped themselves with

Emergency laws. India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia and now Ghana. Each, in the first few years of consolidation after independence has given itself these powers.

GOOD GOVERNMENT

Good government does not depend upon the absence of these powers. It depends upon the wise, judicious, and discriminate use of them, by the representatives elected by and answerable to the people. Next year if the P.A.P. wins the elections we shall be equipped with Emergency powers.

We stand for an independent democratic non-Communist Malaya. Within this democratic system everyone has the right to compete, to preach his political views.

But the competition must be for the purpose of working the system not for the purpose of destroying. These powers will not be allowed to be used against political opponents within the system who compete for the right to work the system.

LABOUR FRONT FOOLING WITH HUMAN LIBERTIES

But we shall not play the fool with human lives and liberties as the Labour Front Government is suspected to have done. Why arrest and detain Dr. Chuang Chu Lin, hold him for many months as a dangerous tool used by the Communist, then suddenly release him to shake gratefully the hands of the Chief Minister? Why arrest and detain Linda Chen for nearly 2 years as a Communist, and then without so much as an expression of regret of errors made, suddenly release her as others were being banished to China? Why give Lim Kean Chye an entry permit in Singapore, then arrest him as he arrives on that entry permit? And look at the consequences it brought about in our relations with the Federation. A whole set of new laws was promulgated to change the right of free passage from Singapore to the Federation. Why was the Federation not consulted before a visa was given to some one who had sought re-entry into the Federation as of right, as a Federal Citizen, and had been refused by the Federal Government. Did the Singapore Government think that their action would have no repercussions on the Federation. Could they not foresee the retaliation that it brought about. No Government has the right to play politics with the lives and liberty of people, be they its citizens or not.

And I say now for the benefit of all that a P.A.P. Government will not allow these powers to be used in this reckless and desperate manner. And let us also make it known our definition of the word "subversion" is different from that of the British and perhaps different also from that of the Labour Front. Subversion in our

definition is any political activity designed to further the aims and interests not of our own people but of foreign powers. And by foreign powers we mean not just Russia or China, but also America, Formosa and the Western bloc.

That is the stand of my party. There are many who may be anxious to know where we stand if and when we are the Government. Let the lesson of the fate of Mr. David Saul Marshall and his Labour Front be taken to heart. Their's was an object lesson on how not to win elections.

We the P.A.P. would prefer to lose an election rather than to win it on false premises and false promises. We have grown from strength to strength because we are honest, because what we say publicly we honour publicly.

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