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TEXT OF AN ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE

KUAN YEW, AT THE SINGAPORE UNION OF JOURNALISTS

LUNCH AT THE CATHAY DRAGON ROOM ON SUNDAY,

AUGUST 16, 1959.

When I was invited to a Union of Journalists lunch in order that I should have an opportunity of telling the gossellers of the English-speaking world what to propagate, I wondered why they made it a lunch because as a rule I believe that if one wanted to relax, one does it in the evenings, but I discovered to my horror that for \$4 the Union of Journalists went a very long way. What is required now, is not a serious dissertation of the future of the English-educated, but really a light and delightful dissertation on perhaps the delicacies of roast duck as compared with roast chicken. However, I am already scripted for the benefit of Radio Singapore and you have to bear with me.

When I was invited to choose my subject for this talk, I could not resist the urge to try and enlist your members as propagandists from the point of view that the English-educated can and will play their role in the social revolution of Malaya if the challenge were fairly and squarely presented to them.

Your members are singularly placed to do this job. Even if you cannot suggest the solutions you will at least stimulate their minds to work out the solutions instead of burying their heads in the sands of the past. No single factor has so great an influence on the minds of the English-educated in Malaya as the newspaper. Those who work in newspapers have, therefore, a heavy responsibility not to allow those who own newspapers to distort the problems we are confronted with. Hence my subject: "The English-educated and the future."

First, let me define the meaning of the phrase "English educated" in the Malayan context as distinct from the phrase "English speaking." By English-educated I do not mean just somebody who can speak, read and write the English language. I refer to that group of people who have gone through the Government or Mission English schools in Malaya. They are not merely English-speaking. They have also acquired certain definite characteristics as a result of going through the English schools in this country.

There are others in Malaya who are English-speaking like those here - Englishmen, Australians, Americans - even Frenchmen. And there are Chinese who have learned English in China or Hong Kong or elsewhere. But they are not the Malayan "English-educated." They are different. Not only do they speak with a different accent and have different slang and idioms but they have also different standards of behaviour, different scales of values, different characteristics from the Malayan "English-educated."

We may not be conscious of the Malayan English-educated group as a homogeneous one. Let me give you an illustration. When I was a student in England we used to go - my friends and I from Malaya - to a club called China Institute where Chinese People from all over the world foregathered. There we met Chinese from China, from the West Indies, Mauritius, Malaya and other places too. All spoke English. All have learnt it either in China or West Indies or Mauritius or in Malaya. But the Malayan student could unerringly pick out another Malayan by the way he dressed and talked and his mannerisms. The Malayan English-educated was a definite type. And another strange thing was that the English-educated Chinese from Malaya found that he had more in common with the English-educated non-Chinese from Malaya, than with the English-speaking Chinese from Mauritius, West Indies or China.

Having thus defined our term "the English-educated," let me list their characteristics. Their good points are, first, they are homogeneous. Next, they have ceased to think of themselves primarily as Chinese, Malays or Indians. They are loyal to the community, honest and well-behaved, if somewhat too obedient to colonial authority. Their weak points are, in the case of the Chinese and the Indians, that they are devitalised, almost emasculated, as a result of deculturalisation. The syllabus in the English schools in pre-war Malaya had pumped in a completely English set of values and ideals.

They have not taken to those but they have lost their own set of values and the ideals of their own culture. And because they have not quite worked out, as the Chinese, Indians and Negroes in the West Indies have, new pattern of their own culture, there is a certain loss of confidence in themselves. When you see the Chinese-educated products from the Chinese schools, particularly when they speak on public platforms, you will understand what I mean.

The English-educated is somewhat uncertain and hesitant, speaking and thinking in a language he has learnt all his waiting life but which is not part of his own being. The other is supremely confident, speaking and thinking in a language which is part of his being and his cultural world.

Next, and this is a serious disadvantage in a democratic system, the English-educated have lost touch with the mass of their own people who speak the vernacular languages. The only exception are the Malay English-educated. They first go to a Malay school and finish their standard V before he goes over to English. Hence the difference between the English-educated Malay leaders who have not lost touch with their ground and the English-educated Chinese and Indians who have, broadly speaking as a class, lost touch with the mass of the people from whence they came.

I have not yet come across a Malay who is unable to speak or read and write in Malay. But I have come across many Chinese and Indians who are educated in English but are unable to read and write or even speak Chinese or Tamil or Malayalam or whatever their native tongue may be. Of course there are exceptions. Many, for instance, of the Chinese who are educated in the English schools are also educated at home in Chinese or have been to Chinese schools. But they are the exceptions.

What is the future of this class? Before we discuss that can I briefly sketch what has been their past, what is the present and then attempt to prophesy the future?

In the past they have been those most favourably placed and treated in colonial Malaya. The British, not unnaturally, preferred to deal with people who could speak their language and who understood their manners and mannerisms. Therefore the English-educated had risen to the highest position, both in Government service and in the professions as doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers and in trade and commerce.

They were the elite - the elite of a colonial society. They got the best jobs in the commercial firms. They were paid more in the English commercial firms than their counterparts were paid in the Chinese or Indian firms. In the Government service only the best of the English-educated were admitted. The local university which then consisted of two colleges - Medical College and Raffles College - only admitted the English-educated. There were no English-educated trishaw riders or rickshaw pullers, labourers or coolies, as they used to be called, because whoever became English-educated need not become a coolie or a trishaw rider. Other more profitable avenues of employment were open to them.

How closely the social and economic position of the English-educated was related to the political power in the country was shown when the Japanese took over in 1942. Then, all of a sudden, the English-educated lost their special

position. The people who rose to high places and who could do business and make profits with the Japanese merchants and the Japanese Government were those who could speak and write the Japanese language, or, at second best, the Chinese "Kanji" characters.

And so the Chinese-educated did better than the English-educated in Japanese occupied Malaya. Suddenly the English-educated discovered that they had lost their foster-parents. And they had to compete in the hard, cruel world on equal terms with everybody else. But we should all be cheered to remember that although they did not do as well as when the British were here, in open competition with the other language groups they did not go under.

Then in 1945 the British returned and the English-educated once again assumed their pre-eminence. Well, so much for the past.

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Now, for the present. Those who want to defend and extol the qualities of the English-educated can easily point out that the leadership of both the Federation and of Singapore are in English-educated hands. Most of the members of the Government of the Federation of Malaya are English-educated - the Tunku went to Kuala Kangsar and Cambridge, Dato Razak went to Kuala Kangsar and London, and so on.

Similarly, in Singapore. But I would like to suggest to you that this is not proof of the superlative qualities of the English-educated. It is proof that in a given historical situation the English-educated nationalist has a useful role to play. In colonial revolution in all the territories of the British Empire, when independence was won from the British Raj, power was handed over to the English-educated local nationalists. So it was in India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Ghana and Malaya. But having won power, the role that they have to fulfil depends upon the circumstances and conditions of their people and their country.

I suggest that the role of the English-educated leadership in Singapore and in Malaya is the role it is playing in India. It is for them to carry the social revolution one step further by extending the rights and privileges that they have wrested from the British to the mass of their own people, the majority of whom are not English-educated.

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For the future, it means working out a system of education where the products from all our schools have common value and ideals. In the immediate present, it may mean that some of the jobs which would otherwise have gone to the English-educated would go to the Chinese-educated, the Malay-educated and the others. But in fair and open competition. It will not cripple the English-

educated, for they are as able as the Chinese-educated or any other educated class and will survive under fair and open competition.

What will happen to the English-educated in the end? I think as a type whose class was an appendage of the British colonial system as we knew them they will gradually disappear. They will undergo changes in their outlook and characteristics for change they must, if they are to survive. I believe they will change, not perish.

Let me give you some interesting statistics which will show you that the English-speaking - I use the phrase "English-speaking" advisedly as distinct from "English-educated" - is a growing sector of our community.

In 1938 there were 47,586 children in school. 30 per cent. in English schools, 60 per cent in Chinese, nine per cent in Malay and one per cent in Tamil. In 1959 there were 324,689 children in schools - 51 per cent in English schools, 44 per cent in Chinese, five per cent in Malay and 1/2 per cent in Tamil. So, over the last 21 years - from 1938 to 1959 - the percentage of students studying English, far from decreasing has, in fact, increased to first place.

But I will tell you why I believe that they will not be "English-educated" types of the past. Because large numbers of these students in English schools are no longer being deculturalised and being devitalised or having their innards taken out of them by having English cultural values being pumped into them. Many Chinese and Malay educated parents keep up the education of their children, at home or in other schools, in their own language and culture.

Next, in the schools themselves, they are being taught their own mother tongue and Malay - the national language. Through language they have access to the literature and culture of their own people. Also, the content of the textbooks that are being used is being radically altered to infuse and inculcate in our students pride and confidence in themselves as Malaysians, pride in their own people and their own culture.

It is likely that English will continue to be used in the Federation and, therefore, in Singapore for 10 or something more years. Nobody disputes the usefulness of the English language. India, after 12 years of independence, is doubting whether she should discard it as the official language. The whole world of the sciences and technology is opened up through this medium. The trends are that in 10 years time there will be a higher percentage of our population who will

be proficient in English for they would have learnt it not only in the English-language schools but also in the Chinese, Tamil and Malay schools.

But I suggest to you that the English-speaking students who will emerge in 10 or 20 years time from today from the English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil schools will be completely different - a completely different person from the English-educated person of the past. They will not be deculturalised or devitalised. They will have vitality and confidence and a sense of dedication to our own country and our own people.

So, in a way, the present English-educated type will disappear and a new English-speaking group with different characteristics will emerge.

This is the historical process of Asians who first became Western-educated and ceased to be Asians giving way to Asians who have learned Western languages, techniques and science but remain Asians and are proud to be Asians. What the English-educated of today must do is to help create a people who are Malayan-educated but are also proficient amongst other things in the English language.

I suggest to you, Gentlemen, that is the way to the future.

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