SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT JK/MC. FE.110/60

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE SINGAPORE HARBOUR BOARD TUG "TEGOH" BY H.E. THE YANG DI-PERTUAN NEGARA ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1960.

The building and launching of the tug "Tegoh" illustrates in miniature the problem of government and administration which former colonial territories face when they assume statehood. This tug would never have been built but for the employment by the Harbour Board of expatriate naval architects, ship's draughtsmen, marine engineer draughtsmen, engineers and platers, together with local artisans, shipwrights, iron workers, platers, fitters, carpenters and electricians. Without the local artisans, the tug would never have been built here, for it would then have been cheaper to have bought the tug from abroad. But with the expatriate technicians, the tug could not have been built here in spite of all the skill of our local artisans.

National Archives of Singapore

National sentiment desires the riddance of all expatriates as agents of the exploiting colonial government, but the practical needs of making the national economy work requires that expatriate technicians be employed. Such a situation

must contain the seeds of inner contradiction. A plain straight forward nationalist line by the government which results in the expulsion of all expatriate technicians may lead to a sagging of the whole complex of the economy, as indeed has happened in some newly independent territories. But to ignore the anti-colonial sentiments of our people will be to store up trouble for the future. The only practical solution is to acknowledge our need for the time being for expatriate technicians, be they members of the former colonial power or otherwise, and to continue to use them. But at the same time, national sentiments will be satisfied only if increasing numbers of our local men are being trained here and abroad to replace these expatriates and do their jobs in the near future. This aspect of the problem of government would be made easier if expatriate technicians understand some of these emotional factors which a representative government has to consider. And also it helps to make clear that expatriate technicians carry out the policy decided by the government and do not decide on policy as they did in the past.

National Archives of Singapore

No sector of our commercial complex has a more immediate and direct bearing on Singapore's economy than the port.

A Port Authority is to be set up. Its Chairman and Chief Executive will have to be recruited from abroad, for the man who runs this port must have the technical and administrative skill and experience to make it function smoothly and efficiently, otherwise we may well have to pay more for our rice and other basic necessities imported into Singapore through this port, apart from its effects on our entrepot trade.

The unification of the functions of the Singapore Harbour Board, Marine Department and, possibly, part of the Marine Branch of the Public Works Department, and the extension and development of the port area, are being studied. Whether decentralisation will be carried to the point of establishing subsidiary organisation not only for dock labour, but also for dockyard and ship repair, is still not decided.

National Archives of Singapore

However, it is hoped that by the end of this year plans for the unification and integration of the port facilities and services into a Port Commission would have been completed and draft legislation settled not only for a Port Authority, but also for the Dock Labour Corporation. Consideration will also be given to some of the useful leads contained in the Report of the commission on Contract Labour, which will shortly be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Good sense and good economics require that we must always find practical not doctrinaire solutions to our problems of growth and development, most particularly in our port administration.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The above release replaces BYC/MC.FE.106/60,

issued at 1915 hours, February 26, 1960.

FEBRUARY 27,1960 (Time issued 1145 hours)

National Archives of Singapore