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TEXT OF A SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,

MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE UNIVERSITY

SOCIALIST CLUB ON FRIDAY, JULY 1, 1960.

Before I launch into the subject of my talk this evening it is necessary to define what we mean by the building of a nation. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines a `nation' as "a distinct race or people, having a common descent, language, history or political institutions." A distinct people, I hope we are; if not a distinct race, at least a distinct people having a common descent ultimately, a common language ultimately, history inevitably, political institutions inevitably.

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To what extent has the University of Malaya made its contribution towards this in the past and what should be its present role?

Before one has a nation, there must be two things. First, the content of a common people with a common identity of interest, a common social experience. And, secondly, complete freedom to exercise the collective will. One may precede the other. You may have a common people with a common destiny first and then later, independence, or you have independence first and later a common people with a common destiny. But a nation in a state of subjugation is ex hypothesi not a nation. Therefore, I would like to divide my talk tonight into two sections. First, the creation of an independent entity. Secondly, the moulding of the contents of that independent entity.

First: the fight for freedom. Partly because of the fortunate position of the English-educated and the English-educated elite, there was not the same social and economic pressure to bring about that willingness to man barricades which you find in Chinese high school students. This is a social phenomenom which we have vividly in our minds if we look back over events of the last few years. That is not to say that the products of the institutions which later became the University of Malaya - King Edward VII College of Medicine and Raffles College - lacked either the courage of their convictions, or the desire to be free.

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Had the history of the revolutionary struggles for independence been a long drawn-out one, as it was in India, then you would have found graduates of

these institutions, and of the University of Malaya playing an exceedingly important role in the struggle for an independent Malaya. But as things were, the Malayan Communist Party, paid for its role as a catalyst in the bringing about of an independent Malaya.

I am not suggesting that if there had been no M.C.P. and an armed revolution, there would not have been an independent Malaya. There was an independent Ghana three years ago and there is going to be an independent Nigeria later this year, without any of these two territories having their armed Communist insurrection.

But I do suggest, that the M.C.P. and its armed struggle accelerated the changes towards independence which would not otherwise have been so rapid. And to that extent it has bestowed upon us an acute problem in that power was handed over not to the M.C.P. but to the non-Communist party which did not physically wrest power from colonial controls.

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You have therefore the intriguing situation where a colonial power, which was well in possession of all its faculties to maintain its dominance, handed over power to nationalist and other non-Communist groups, before they were fully

organised to force and coerce the colonial power to hand over that power. And the contest so far, as the fight for a politically independent Malaya, is largely over.

I suggest that the English-educated and the products of the two former colleges, and the University of Malaya have no reason whatsoever to feel abashed that they did not spill more blood on behalf of the independence of their people. It was an accident of history. In fact, as I indicated earlier, there were all the signs that had there been a long drawn-out struggle, then more and more of its products would have joined the ranks of the James Puthucheary's and the Sandra Woodhull's, found their way to languid isolation and confinement in the not unpleasant surroundings of Changi Camp, there to write learned dissertations on the capitalist economy of Malaya.

But let us recognise this fact for this is the root cause of the problems which stem after independence. The power of the State has been handed over whilst the main armed contender for power has been excluded.

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The second aspect is the contents of the nation. This is the aspect which now poses the most acute problem to the people of Malaya - a distinct race of people having a common descent, language, history or political institutions. That is a nation in its complete and absolute form with all the attributes of a coherent

social group. We have none of these attributes in its completeness. Independence has preceded the creation of the attributes required to nationhood.

What contribution towards this has the University of Malaya made in the past and what is its present role?

I venture to suggest that of all groups of persons, the products of the University of Malaya are the group nearest to the norm of what a Malayan should be ultimately in a Malayan nation. For in no other educational group has there developed such homogenity of attitudes, of values and social cohesion cutting across racial and cultural lines as amongst the products of this University. I am not suggesting that the products of the Muslim College which teaches Islam in Klang, or the products of the University of Nanyang lack social cohesion and dynamism. But what there is does not transcend the racial barriers of the races of Malaya. Therefore, through no virtue of your own, you can claim to be the people who are most likely to become the average ultimate Malayan.

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In the past this institution has produced the doctors, teachers, dentists and the administrators. And the one powerful factor towards cohesion and unity is the fact that an elite which today constitute the administrative cadre both in the Federation and in Singapore were common products of this institution. When

your Raja Mohar and his team from the Federation have common market talks with the Singapore team led by Abu Bakar Pawanchee, you have a meeting of two identical groups of people who share a common experience, who through their years in the same seat of learning have common beliefs, have common likes and dislikes, who laugh at the same things and cry for more or less the same reasons. And that is a powerful factor. What the University of Malaya has done is to produce an elite, cutting across the racial and linguistic barriers, which today, man the control points in both territories. That is a powerful factor for stability and cohesion. But only for the time being, because the underlying forces in both territories are bound to force changes in the complexion and the structure of the government, and its hierarchy. These underlying forces are bound to come more and more into prominence with every passing election. But I suggest if we are consciously aware of our virtues and short-comings, we are more likely to overcome the difficulties which we are confronted with.

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What would you say is the present role of the University of Malaya?

What is the role of any major university in any country? It is to get the best intellects and talent available in that given society, give it the best of training in order that it can contribute its maximum for the welfare of its society as a whole. That must be the object of any national university in any nation anywhere

in the world, as a seat for the dissemination of knowledge and learning, the fostering of research and advancement of human knowledge. And so it must be with the University of Malaya.

But there are certain peculiar problems with which we are confronted which makes it necessary for us to underline certain roles which this University must fulfill if it is to do its duty to society.

In the under-developed regions of the world newly emerged, if somewhat prematurely, to independence, we have to make up for lost time. For in the pre-independence phase of all the colonial universities, be they British, French, Dutch, Belgian or otherwise, they only teach you the bare minimum to make you reasonably competent assistants. The dearth of facilities for training and the acquisition of skills in the scientific, technological and professional fields, is common to all colonial universities. They allow some doctors, dentists, maybe some architects, but engineers and scientists in large numbers, industrial talent and skills, are absent for they were the exclusive preserve of the imperial power. And so, in these fields we have to concentrate our effort to make up for past deficiencies.

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Another important emphasis we must give is on the large numbers we must produce in a relatively short space of time to catch up with the neglect of the past. In the past, for a multitude of reasons they have always said we must maintain the highest of standards. And high academic standards were maintained in the British universities in the colonies, but for the relatively few people. The result is we have inherited an institution which, for all its high standards in medicine, dentistry, the sciences and the arts, is producing students at paucity rate which would shock the people if they knew the price they had to pay for it.

Last year the Professor for Dentistry told me that he expected some six dentists to graduate. From a magnificent institution equipped with some of the most modern instruments and the most capable and well qualified of teachers, six dentists for the whole of Malaya, perhaps two for Singapore and four for the Federation! The result will be, and the result has been, that a whole host of unqualified technicians who learn by trial and error and are neither dentists nor dental surgeons have to be, from time to time, allowed into the profession, if for no other reason than that the people must have some dental service. And so it is, that draftsmen today are doing most of the jobs of the architects.

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If the University of Malaya is to play its role in nation building in getting the best brains, the best talent in the country and give it the best training for the

benefit of society as a whole, then you have got to produce them in large numbers even if it means a slight lowering of general standards because of the larger intake of students in proportion to teaching staff. A possible solution to some of our acute problems is a slightly more liberal intake of students, a slightly larger and more rapid production of graduates at general level whilst maintaining for your Honours students, for the academically brilliant and capable, standards which could compare with that of the best of universities in the world.

Other countries, both Communist and non-Communist, around us, are doing it. They are producing graduates to meet the needs of their expanding industrial society, enormous quantities of what by absolute European or British standard would be, not completely qualified engineers, technicians, draftsmen-architects, geologists, and so on. The Indonesians are doing it, the Chinese are doing it with a work as you learn curriculum; and so are the Indians. If we are not to be confronted with a problem of having to import our doctors every now and then because the local doctors have acquired sufficient experience in the hospitals decide to launch into the adventures, often lucrative, of private practice, then we have to train more doctors. Only when you do not produce them locally do you have to import them. The long term solution is to produce them locally.

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But this is only one facet - the production of the men to fill all the important jobs in the managerial, administrative, technical, scientific and professional fields - your doctors, dentists, lawyers, architects, engineers, accountants and administrators. There are more big jobs going than there are big people with the right training ready to fill them. And that is the problem of Malayanisation. Right at this moment we have got the Singapore Harbour Board staffed three-quarters by expats. Managerial skills connected with the harbour, how to turn ships around, how to clear cargo quickly, how to manage men, how to run the dockyard. They are all done by expats. They can go any time we desire them to go. But our problem is to find sufficient men who can learn these jobs quickly. The wealth of opportunity which early independence has presented to our youth with is something which in later years your children will read like the Arabian Nights. You can graduate in 1960, you can become a deputy secretary of a Ministry by 1965, you might even become a Permanent Secretary in 1970. That is the way it is. There is a dearth of trained talent - it is not the dearth of talent, for I do not believe that anybody thinks that our people lack talent. But what we do lack is the discipline, the training and the expertise, the know-how to run the mechanics of modern state. That is one of your primary functions which must be underlined.

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But in the long run, whether we create this one people, distinct, having common descent, language, history or political institutions depends very largely not so much upon the knowledge that is poured into you, but the feeling of oneness as a result of a common experience.

I mentioned in the opening of my talk that one of the most significant features of present day Singapore and the Federation is that in the cockpit in both territories, you have people trained from the same institution who understand each other, who are sometimes even college mates, who respond to the same impulses. So long as the University of Malaya remains one, although one division is in Kuala Lumpur and one in Singapore, I say there is no more single powerful, unifying factor than this University. You all know that in 1962, it is going to be two universities, duplicity of professors, readers, lecturers, creating more opportunities for rapid promotion, and I hope more productive research scholarship and trained students. But those of us who have quietly watched the beneficial effects of there being only one institution in the past will be sorry to see it pass. However, for many years to come, in the fields of medicine, dentistry, engineering, agriculture, we will have to have an exchange of students. It will be some years before the Singapore Division can put up an engineering or agriculture faculty. It may be sometime before the Federation sets up its medical faculty to teach medicine and dentistry.

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In the foreseeable future - five/ten years - the creation of a common identity arising out of a common experience, is the most important role the University of Malaya and its products have to fulfil in nation building.

Lastly, may I just touch upon a problem which is in all our minds. What happens to that large stream of the Chinese-educated in Nanyang? Are they to remain distinct and separate, coming out from Chinese schools, going to a Chinese language university, building up a separate sector of the community? The dangers are there. But I would suggest that all parties, the Chinese educated - their students, their teachers and their parents - understand the difficulties inherent in the situation, and so do the Malay and English educated. I am happy to learn from the Minister for Education that for next year, the University of Malaya has trebled its intake from the Chinese schools. I am told that not less than 120 students will be put through special pre-university courses to fit them for the sciences, medicine, dentistry, economics and arts. And the University of Nanyang, if it wants to move towards a common destiny, will have to absorb more and more of the Malay and English educated. That is the only sane, rational way out. If we are realists, we know this is a process which will take a long time, for emotional and linguistic pride takes a long time to adjust to the realities of the situation. But adjustment there is. Ultimately we should move to

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a position where although we do have two universities, one university of Nanyang and the other University of Singapore, one catering for the time being mainly from the Chinese stream, the other from the English and Malay streams there will nevertheless be large overlaps in their student population, and in the similarity of the content of the education and ultimately in the common identity of purpose and social experience.

In the university students of today, we must find the administrative, technical and professional talent to man the institutions of state in the near future.

If they share an identity of purpose and have common beliefs, then we may succeed in creating a distinct people with a common language, history and political institutions. If not, then we may be bedevilled by all the problems of a multi-racial society which achieved political independence before it had acquired a common social identity.

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