

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

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TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE

KUAN YEW, ON THE MERGER MOTION AT THE SITTING

OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ON FRIDAY,

NOVEMBER 24, 1961.

There are two parts in the amendment moved by the Member for Queenstown. The first is that Singapore should merge with the Federation as the 12th State. The second is that all Singapore citizens should automatically become Federation citizens.

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As to the first part, let me refer him to the joint communique issued on 16th September this year by the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya and myself. It stated:

"The two Prime Ministers are satisfied that all legitimate local and special interests of the people in the two territories can and will be

safeguarded with the merger of Singapore as a State within the Federation."

I emphasize the words "as a State within the Federation". There is no doubt whatsoever that Singapore will be the 12th State of the new Federation.

As to the second part of the amendment, may I refer to paragraph 14 of Command Paper 33. The clear, categorical statement agreed to by the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya says that "nationals of the larger Federation, whether Singapore citizens or Federation citizens, will as nationals have equal rights, carry the same passport, enjoy the same protection and be subject to equal duties and responsibilities under the Constitution of the larger Federation."

The only point where Singapore citizens are different from Federation citizens is that Singapore citizens will continue to enjoy their State rights and privileges such as those in labour and education, within Singapore, and will vote in Singapore for their representatives to the new Federation Parliament, while citizens of the present Federation of Malaya will vote in the present Federation for their representatives to the same new Federation Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we had anticipated that the Barisan Sosialis would continue to raise a false alarm on the question of citizenship. Hence, in clear and explicit terms the White Paper explains that no Singapore citizen will lose his Singapore citizenship rights. In addition, he will acquire new rights as a national of the new Federation. Among those rights will be the right to elect representatives direct to the new Federation Parliament, the right to carry the same passport, to enjoy the same rights and privileges under the Constitution, and to be subject to the same duties and responsibilities. These rights and duties are set out in many sections of the Federation Constitution beginning with Article 8 emphasizing that all citizens are equal. This will later be amended to emphasize that all nationals of the new Federation shall be equal.

We discussed the question of citizenship and nationality, and representation with the Federation Prime Minister and his colleagues. Our respective arguments and viewpoints were recorded in an exchange of letters. I would like to take this opportunity to read to the House the contents of these two letters.

( Two letters to be tabled)

Sir, you will remember that in September this year the Leader of the House asked the Member for Queenstown to state his party's views on merger. In his reply the member had stated that Singapore should be merged with the Federation as the 12th State like Penang and Malacca. I emphasize the written words of the Member for Queenstown on behalf of Barisan Sosialis "like Penang and Malacca". He referred to this as "complete merger". And yet he is now asking that unlike Penang and Malacca, Singapore should not abide by the citizenship laws of the Federation of Malaya, but that there should be automatic conversion of Singapore citizenship to Federation citizenship. As the member for Anson said yesterday, the Barisan Sosialis demand for "complete merger like Penang and Malacca" was a great mistake. But I venture to suggest that the ghost writers were led to its predicament by their being forced to say that they want complete merger when in fact the last thing they want is merger in any shape or form, until of course when and if there is a Communist government in the Federation of Malaya.

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Having said that they wanted complete merger, they then, as the Tunku has said in the Federation Parliament on 16th October, asked for "impossible terms and conditions" in order that merger can be frustrated. And if this demand were unexpectedly agreed to by a generous Federation Parliament, the Communists would still oppose merger. Of course it is difficult to get the people to oppose

merger on the ground that merger is not good for the Communists. So they have to get the people to oppose merger by falsely saying that the merger proposals are bad for the people.

Hence their constant search for an issue ostensibly unconnected with Communism with which to rally the Chinese, to oppose merger in any shape or form. The openly communal line they in Barisan Sosialis are taking has naturally provoked some dangerous talk by the Malay Assemblymen about "parang panjang" being brought out.

But theirs is an impossible task. The Chinese, Indian and English-speaking sections of the people in Singapore do not want Singapore to go in on the basis of Penang or Malacca. Many will lose their citizenship rights because they cannot qualify under the Federation citizenship laws. All will lose the present status they enjoy, of the free competition between all races in the Civil Service, in trade, commerce and industry and in nearly all other walks of life.

One of the Member for Queenstown's ghost writers has referred to the "Sinn Fein" movement in Ireland. This is for them an unfortunate analogy. It is because complete merger at present may lead to unhappiness and a "Sinn Fein" movement that the Tunku has agreed to give Singapore large powers of local

autonomy like Northern Ireland. Had these powers of local autonomy been given to Southern Ireland, the history of Eire may have been different. On the other hand, the people who want to create "Sinn Fein" trouble are the Communists in Barisan Sosialis, who are suggesting that we should hand over education to the Federation Government and implement the Rahman Talib Report in Singapore with all its consequences on Chinese Middle Schools in Singapore and on Nanyang University.

While they are publicly saying this on the one hand, their agitators and cadres on the other hand are mounting trouble in the Chinese schools, over a very simple and innocuous proposition that has been agreed to between the school principals and management committees and the Education Ministry: that all those who want to take the Government upper secondary two examination at the end of six years must first pass the Government's secondary four examination at the end of four years.

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They are trying to get Chinese Middle School students excited over the absurd proposition that students should be allowed to take their M.A., so to speak, before they have even matriculated.

The attitude of the Government is simple and obviously reasonable. There is no reason at all to be excited about the future of Chinese education, language or culture. Education in our merger proposals is a subject reserved for the State. The 4:2 system, has been agreed to between the school principals and management committees and the Education Ministry. It is not the wish of the government to impose any change on Chinese schools, even though such change is for the better, unless the Chinese educational world themselves agree. I repeat it was their decision to adopt the 4:2 system. So the Communists will run around in vain to find a rallying point in the Chinese schools from which to mount trouble for an assault on the government.

Some members of the Barisan Sosialis are keen bridge players. I am told by the Member for Jalan Besar that while the Barisan Sosialis were in the doldrums in the last few months staying at the Canning Rise Assemblymen's hostel reading the news of our progress towards merger, they used to while away their time playing bridge, day and night. They will appreciate this little metaphor. We called merger as trumps. They raised the bid on merger as trumps. Our merger partner, the Federation government, on the other side raised the bid higher. Finally Barisan Sosialis called for a grand slam with merger as trumps. They want complete merger with no reserve powers. In our hand we hold the 7, 8, 9, 10 and ace of merger trumps. In the Tunku's hand he holds the

ace, jack, queen, king of merger trumps. Probably that is why they have ill-advisedly called him feudal. Now their hand will be played out, and a terrifying lot of points will be lost. Had they been honest and called for independence for Singapore as trumps, regardless of the tremendous loss of face and confidence that will be caused by their going back on their declarations and stands since 1945, they might have stood a better chance of survival. As it is, the folly of their false and hypocritical proposition that they want more merger than the Singapore Government or the Federation Government or the people of Singapore want, will land them in more and more difficulties until their game is inevitably and irretrievably lost.

A lot of ill-conceived and ill-considered remarks about the Tunku and citizenship and nationality proposals of this White Paper have been made by the Communist boys behind Barisan Sosialis through the voice of the Member of Queenstown in this House. He has two assets from their point of view -- a strong voice and a total disregard for reason, logic and decency. He has referred to the citizenship and nationality proposals agreed between the Tunku and his colleagues and the Singapore Government as a form of apartheid in which he wildly alleges that Singapore citizens will be segregated from the Federation citizens. Nothing is more remote from the truth.

The problem we face is how to bring about merger without having to disenfranchise over 230,000 people who will never qualify under the Federation Citizenship laws. This is a figure which has been arrived at by an analysis of the persons resident in the Federation of Malaya who have not been born there and computing the proportion of such persons who have got citizenship, to those who have not.

The Member for Queenstown has read out too many different speeches written by too many ghost writers, and the arguments that they put forward for him to read out are often contrary ones. First, he has asked in writing for merger as a 12th state like Penang and Malacca. Then he rejected the conditions for citizenship which applied in Penang and Malacca, and wanted instead automatic conversion for Singapore citizenship to Federation citizenship, even though he admits that the rules for Singapore citizenship were quite different being freer and easier than the rules for Federation citizenship.

Then in lengthy and complicated arguments he says that even if the rules of Penang and Malacca were applied, nearly all Singapore citizens will qualify.

Yet during last month on October 20th., I asked publicly in the papers since he believed that all Singapore citizens could qualify under Federation

citizenship laws whether he would accept the citizenship laws that applied in Penang and Malacca. There was no reply. Instead he repeated the absurd claim for automatic conversion, and he is trying to laugh off the different residential qualifications required by the Federation citizenship laws by saying that only a few European civilians and ex-Service men are involved. I asked him whether he was aware that a large number of Indians as British Commonwealth citizens were allowed to acquire and have acquired Singapore citizenship after only two years residence. Over 50,000 such persons the majority of whom are Indians would be disenfranchised on the residential qualification alone if we had merger on the basis of Penang and Malacca. Yet the Member for Queenstown tries to laugh it off as only a few European civilians and ex-service men are involved.

Any Singapore citizen who goes to reside in the Federation and would like to give up Singapore citizenship and together with it give up his special state rights in Singapore can do so and apply for citizenship of the Federation. If he can pass the rules for citizenship including the language test, then he can convert his Singapore citizenship to Federation citizenship. But there are 230,000 present Singapore citizens who will be unable either because of the residential qualification or the language qualification to satisfy the Federation citizenship laws. They can still travel freely in the Federation even though they cannot pass the tests for Federation citizenship. So where is the apartheid.

The members for Queenstown, Thomson, Pasir Panjang and Moulmein are persons who were not born in Singapore. The members for Queenstown and Thomson were born in the Federation and the other two were born in China. Under Penang and Malacca conditions, they would have to re-apply for registration as citizens. They know very well that the Federation Government does not give citizenship rights to Communists, pro-Communists or conscious stooges of the Communist and if they had to apply for registration as Federation citizens they will never get it. So for their own selfish interests, to ensure that they get Federation citizenship and can run for elections in the Federation in case they cannot win in Singapore, they have mistakenly asked for complete merger like Penang and Malacca and in effect sell out the rights of over 230,000 Singapore citizens who would be completely disenfranchised by the application of the Penang and Malacca conditions for merger.

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Very few people in Singapore change their residence to the Federation.

99.9% of the people of Singapore are not Communists and they can qualify under the Federation citizenship laws and vote there if they change their residence and know the Malay language. Only the Communists and there are many Communists in Barisan Socialis are anxious about their getting Federation

citizenship by registration since they know that the Federation Government will never give citizenship to Communists and let them run around in the Federation.

Then we are told that the term "national" of the new Federation means absolutely nothing. You will remember, Sir, that the Member for Anson raised certain questions arising out of the term "national of the new Federation" and I said then that I would ask the State Advocate-General to advise us on this question of nationality. I have done this. I would like now to table his considered opinion on this term "nationality" of the new Federation.

(to table S.A.G.'s opinion)

In simple non-legal language, the State Advocate-General's opinion means simply this: that the terms "citizen" and "national" have exactly the same meaning. "Citizen" is usually used in reference to a person's domestic or internal rights with a country and "national" is usually used in reference to a man's international standing and status.

We could just as easily call old Singapore citizens and Federation citizens "citizens of the new Federation" without any change in the meaning or content. Changing a name cannot add to or subtract from the rights of citizens or nationals

of the new Federation whatever they are called, and these rights have been agreed to in paragraph 14 of the White Paper and they will be so enshrined in the Constitution of the new Federation.

If for domestic and internal purposes, a man wants to change his rights of Singapore citizenship to Federation citizenship or vice versa he can do so under the domestic or internal State laws of Singapore and the Federation.

You will see, Sir, that there is no question of any Singapore citizen being a second-class citizen or being segregated from Federation citizens.

In the first Merdeka talks in London in April 1956 the member for Anson who was then Chief Minister led an all party delegation which included Mr. Lim Chin Siong and myself. The first Chief Minister of Singapore got both Mr. Lim and I to agree to his proposals embodied in Heads of agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Singapore.

Paragraph 8(7) defined who were to be "nationals" of Singapore. Paragraph 9 laid down that a "national" of Singapore shall be a British Subject or Commonwealth citizen.

(B) So the term "national" was used by the first Chief Minister with the concurrence of all the members of the all party delegation to mean "citizen" and

the two terms were synonymous. Subsequently instead of the Singapore Nationality Ordinance the Legislative Assembly passed the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance, meaning exactly the same thing.

The Member for Queenstown's advisers, one of whom is only semi-qualified legally, must have told him that there is no such term as Federal National in the present Constitution of the Federation of Malaya, and therefore the term "national" means nothing. But surely do they expect the people of Singapore to be all this simple. Do they believe that all these proposals in Cmd. Paper 33 of 1961 means nothing? Surely, the term "Federal National" will have to be enshrined in the Constitution of the new Federation.

The consideration that must constantly worry the communist backroom boys of the Barisan Socialis is, that whatever happens, after merger, security will be in the hands of a strong Central Government and their opportunity for subversive activity will be severely conscribed and confined.

The member for Queenstown has on behalf of his Communist friends denied that they are worried by this and claim that they are quite happy to go to jail. But on the other hand, the only proposal for merger which is acceptable to the Barisan Socialis, they have stated in writing, is a Confederation where

internal security is not in the hands of the Central Government. But if it has to be merger in a federation and security has to come under the control of the Central Government, then they ask for what the Tunku has called impossible conditions just to block merger.

This is their dilemma. In a 7½ hour speech asking for complete merger as a 12th state, the Member for Queenstown never once mentioned that he is in fact asking for education and labour to be controlled by the central Federation Government. He knows, and even more so, his backroom Communist Barisan boys know that this is the last thing the Chinese educated want. These are the people who by demanding complete merger are asking for education to be implemented in accordance with the Rahman Talib Report, against which they have uttered and are constantly uttering the direst of threats and abuse.

We are not concerned with their hysterics as they find the net of merger and a solidly united Malayan nationalist movement relentlessly closing in on them. The people of Singapore can read, understand and discuss, first that the proposals we have tabled are fair, just, and in their best interest. Everybody having Singapore citizenship will keep his citizenship, lose nothing but instead will get something more, the status of a national of the new Federation. And this

status will bring with it all the rights and privileges written in the Federation Constitution.

I have already explained simply that the only change which involves all Singapore citizens is a change for the better. Instead of the words "British Passport" and "British Subject" appearing on the passport carried by the present citizens of Singapore, will be the words "Federation of Malaysia Passport" and "Federation of Malaysia National". Yet to the jaundiced eye of the Communists this is a retrograde step! But the people understand that with this national status goes all equal rights and privileges with those of the present Federation citizens who will also become nationals of the new Federation.

We say this is in the interest of the people. The people will endorse and support what is in their interests whether the Communists like it or not. After allowing ample time for explanation and discussion to clarify all aspects of merger, the people decide what terms are in their best interest.

Sir, we have been called desperate men. I in particular have been likened to Sygman Rhee, Chiang Kai Shek and Wang Ching Wei. If I were even remotely like any one of these three gentlemen, the ghost writers for the Member for Queenstown, some of whom were and are still sitting in the Public Gallery in

this Assembly throughout this debate, would have disappeared painfully, but quietly, a long time ago. The trouble the Communists are in has been succinctly summed up by Mr. Sandra Woodhull that it was easier to deal with the reactionary than to deal with us in the PAP. We have the advantage of knowing them well, and having good reason to know them well.

In the old united front days when we fought the British for the common objective of independence, we used to work together, and we got to know their modus operandi. We watched the conjuror from back stage not from the front stage. We took out the top hat, they slipped in the white rabbit for us to pull out, to the applause of the multitude. At other times they allowed themselves to be tied up and put into a big suit-case to be locked up. After a decent interval we unlocked the suit case and out they came free men. We know how they work their tricks. We know how the props are used and where the props have to be.

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The trouble with the Member for Queenstown, and that goes for quite a number of the Barisan boys on the other side, is that he has never had enough political conviction to go through this gruelling process of the united front with the Communist before. It may well be that one of these days, through lack of experience and over-excitement, instead of pulling out a white rabbit from a top hat he may pull out a scorpion which may sting him mortally, to the

discomforture of his Communists props. Perhaps, that is why the ghost writers watch him so anxiously from the public gallery while he performs for them. He reads their lines correctly, but often he gets the stage directions wrong. So instead of staring us fiercely in the eye as he reads the heavy lines of abuse and denunciation written for him, he joins us in mirth and merriment at the absurdity of it all.

In any case let him remember that the united front is no longer against the British Raj. It is now going to be against the Malayan nationalists, a completely different proposition. He has joined hands with the communists, not in order to hammer someone who is dying and on the way out like the British Raj, but he has been foolhardy enough to try and take on virile political forces of Malayan nationalism. It is a hazardous gamble that he has embarked on, and the least that we can wish him is that the painful error should be over as quickly as possible.

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NOVEMBER 24, 1961.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, SINGAPORE

EXTRACTS FROM HEADS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN  
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND

THE GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE IN ANNEXURE D  
OF COMMAND PAPER 31 OF 1956.

8. (7) That the nationals of Singapore shall be :-

(a) persons born in Singapore before or after the operative date;

(b) persons born out of Singapore whose fathers were born in  
Singapore, and who have renounced any nationality or  
citizenship to which they may be entitled elsewhere;

(c) persons born in the Federation of Malaya who have been  
ordinarily resident in Singapore for a continuous period of not  
less than two years and whose application for nationality in  
the prescribed manner and form have been accepted by the  
Government of Singapore;

(d) persons

(i) who have resided in Singapore for a continuous  
period of not less than ten years; and

- (ii) who take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of Singapore; and
- (iii) who renounce allegiance to any foreign State or Power and any nationality or citizenship to which they may be entitled outside Singapore; and
- (iv) whose application for nationality made within two years after the operative date in the prescribed manner and form have been accepted by the Government of Singapore;
- (e) persons naturalised in Singapore in accordance with the laws for the time being in force;

Provided that nationality acquired under clause (c) or clause (d) or clause (e) may be revoked in accordance with the law for the time being in force.

9. The Singapore Independence Bill shall include a provision whereby a national of Singapore shall cease to be a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies but shall be a British subject or Commonwealth citizen, and the Singapore Independence Order in Council shall include a provision whereby a citizen of any Commonwealth country which recognizes nationals of Singapore as British subjects or Commonwealth citizens shall be recognised in Singapore as a British subject or Commonwealth citizen.

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