**PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH TO UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE STUDENTS UNION AT ROSEE D' OR ON 6TH DECEMBER, 1962.**

This is the third year in succession that I have been honoured as your guest at your annual dinner. On each of the previous occasions, academic freedom was the burning issue. Two years ago, your predecessor gallantly defended the right to academic freedom of a professor of English.

Last year we met in an atmosphere of some excitement as the Communists mounted an effort to break up the government secondary four examinations then held for the first time. I was happy on that occasion to hear your predecessor, Mr. President, come out against the coercion and intimidation going on against students taking the examination.

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This year the mood has changed. It is true that you have just had occasion to write to me about your strong feelings on the blanket ban against all Singapore students travelling in groups to the Federation of Malaya. It is an important issue. And I am sure reasonable adjustments will provide an answer to this issue of academic travel being curbed on account of a few not so academic travellers. But like so many other things at present, it is not a burning issue. For people

generally have had their fill of political strife for the time being. Political slogans and ideological controversy no longer excite or amuse people. It is the natural aftermath of a period of prolonged anxiety which ended in September, three months ago. Uncertainly and insecurity has been banished in Singapore. There is a finality in Malaysia. Men's minds are now focussed on the more mundane but important business of making a living, of finding houses and flats for themselves, schools for their children, community centres for their recreation, clinics to attend when sick, and most important of all, jobs to pay for a reasonable life.

It is a only natural that there should be this change in emphasis in the minds of people from ideological and political struggle to the prosaic business of making a reasonable living. After all, what is the point of Happy Malaysia or Greater Malaysia unless we will have a better and happier life for ourselves and our children.

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It is a change in mood which even those engaged in perpetual mischief have had to face. The Communists who contemplated mounting a second boycott of the secondary four examinations last week desisted in the face of this changed mood.

Among the things people are interested in at the moment are the opportunities for educating their children. In the last few days a record total number of 57,000 pupils for next year's primary one intake have been registered and found places in schools. The birth rate was just over 57,000 six years ago. This means in fact that there is almost 100% primary education in Singapore and this primary education is free. It is a task which has been achieved by straining our physical and human resources to the full, running two sessions in nearly all schools with two shifts of teachers and going back to the former system of in-service training of teachers to help man the two shifts.

As the base of the education pyramid widens, so in 12 years from now there will be an enormous bulge at the apex. For not only will demand for higher education be greater because there will be more secondary school graduates, but even more because parents realise that a university degree insures a comfortable future for their children. If in the past the ambition was to hit the jackpot at the bottom of the rainbow in the tin and rubber market, today the ambition is to get university education, a status symbol of immense satisfaction socially and economically.

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The buoyant economy of Malaya and Singapore in the postwar years have improved with Merdeka in Malaya and self-government for Singapore. So the phenomenon of the poorly employed university graduates of India is a thing unknown. Any man with the caste mark of a university education finds no difficulty in making a fair living in Malaya.

So it is urgent and vital that we should plan a considerable expansion in our institutions for higher learning. Another college of university standing has been proposed by a group of Chinese educationists and clan elders who have got their plans for a Ngee Ann College approved by the Ministry of Education. The government is considering proposals of expanding the Polytechnic and turning in into an Institute of Technology. Alternatively, a new school of technology with emphasis on the applied Sciences is being planned to keep company with the industrialisation plans at Jurong. Our two universities of Singapore and Nanyang are also planning vast expansion programmes. Some of these plans are fortunately to be financed by private funds and public contributions. But others will have to be provided from the government's not unlimited resources. Next year we shall be spending over $100-million, over 25% of the national expenditure on education. The question for the government is this: with these limited resources, in which direction and in what way can they be used to maximum advantage. Increasing the number of institutions for higher learning

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may well provide the stimulus which comparison and competition between institutions inevitably provides. And it is fair to say that Singapore and Malaysia can well afford and may well require more universities and higher institutions of learning. But what we should not forget is that even industrially advanced countries like Britain and America have had to re-orientate their whole educational emphasis to build up a whole army of technocrats and scientists to meet the needs of the space age of rockets and electronics.

We have to make the right decisions on the type of institutions that must be ready to take in our young people 12 years from now, and train them to help build the industrial society which is the ambition of every emerging nation.

Everybody knows that if Kuala Lumpur is the political capital of Malaysia, Singapore is its commercial metropolis. Indeed it has been so for over 100 years. But there is another role of even greater distinction which we can play, not just as the centre of commerce, but the centre of scholarship, learning and research in South-East Asia. Nowhere are the conditions more favourable. Our seaport brings us into the widest contact with the whole world. Our geographical location ensures that we will continue as one of the great air terminals in South-East Asia with all routes from Europe to Australasia and even to America going through Singapore. The intellectual stimulation of a big city, a centre of

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international intercourse, has always been here, and with jet travel it has become even more so.

We must welcome the best brains from Malaysia. Talent is not something to be found in abundance, like pebbles on the sea-shore. Although education is a subject of State autonomy and funds will be provided from our own revenue, it would be a short-sighted policy to close the doors of our institutions to the able men who want to come here for their training. It was not by accident that so many, indeed the majority of the places of distinction in our society, are occupied by men from the Federation. Because of the education facilities available here and the system of free and open competition with the best men going up to the top, we have attracted and retained, to our advantage, some of the best men from Malaya.

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I can think of no greater contribution Singapore can make to Malaysia than by making our universities and institutions the centres to train the young men and women who will have to man the administrative, industrial and commercial bastions of the nation. After all, quite a number of the senior Ministers in the Federation Government received the first part of their higher education in Singapore, from the Deputy Prime Minister, the Finance Minister to the Minister

for Internal Security. Only the Tunku among them is an exception, but then he is an exception in more than just this respect.

Finally, may I congratulate you, Mr. President, and your members for having arranged two forums on Merger and Malaysia whilst the heat of the battle was at its highest. As it turned out these two open confrontations on neutral ground helped to decide the issue.

No better tribute can be paid to your Union than this: Two openly pro-Barisan Sosialis student clubs, the Nanyang Political Science Society and the University Socialist Club hoped by associating the name of the Polytechnic Political Society to chair and manage a political forum of the main political parties in Singapore and the Federation in the quadrangle of the University of Singapore on Monday this week. But when I suggested that the forum should take place under neutral chairmanship like that of your Union, the Barisan boys lost interest in the forum.

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The battle against the Communists for the minds of our bright young men and women goes on relentless and unceasingly. But as long as we have enough men and women amongst you wish sufficient courage and resolution, the future is reasonably well.