

SPEECH BY SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER

MR. LEE KUAN YEW, ON THE SECOND READING OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY (AMENDMENT) BILL IN THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ON MONDAY, 13TH JULY, 1964.

Mr. Speaker, Sir,

As the debate on the amendment has been allowed to cover the second reading of this Bill, I rise to take the opportunity to support this Bill in principle and to suggest to the Minister concerned that at the end of the second reading of this Bill, he considers sending it to Select Committee. I am not as sanguine as the Member for Ipoh in believing that it is ever possible to get unanimity in this House. It is not in the nature of things. There are those amongst us who represent abiding Communist interests, who must, however genuine, however sincere, however much in good faith this Bill may have been introduced, however scrupulously honest it maybe implemented, they must be against the very principle of Communists being excluded from higher institutions of learning, centers for talent scouting and recruitment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not concerned with broad principles of human rights, fundamental rights guaranteed under the United Nations or under this

Constitution. The Member for Batu has suggested that should he fail in this Chamber, as undoubtedly he will exercise his multifold talents in other fields. He will provide that this provision is ultra vires in the Constitution. But I am concerned that honest men, and there are large numbers of honest men, should be reasonably satisfied in their minds that what is to be done is first necessary, second that there is no less obnoxious way of doing it, and third, that all proper precautions against abuse have been taken.

The problem arises because no governments are perfect, no Minister is infallible, no Special Branch or intelligence organisation is beyond reproach and, therefore, the dangers of abuse or misuse loom very large in the public mind.

Sir, as with the Internal Security Act itself, whether this Bill will succeed in its objective of minimising the Communist use of Universities as centers for breeding and spawning and recruitment, or whether it succeeds, as the Member for Ipoh has suggested, in augmenting the already frustrated, both in numbers and in intensity of frustration depends upon its implementation.

First ask ourselves whether it is necessary, if there is no other way? If I believed that there was some other way, then I would have been reluctant to support what is undoubtedly an encroachment on established practice.

Unfortunately, my view is, knowing the complexities of this problem, that as of this given moment, there is no other way. I shall explain.

We are not dealing, Mr. Speaker Sir, with a society in which all our students are young men in their teens seeking knowledge in secondary schools, going on to Universities, wishing to seek the wisdom which will make them worthy and valuable citizens. That may be so in the majority of students. But over the last 40 years, the Malayan Communist Party has successfully established as caucus in the Chinese Middle Schools of this country, using first, the teachers who were originally employed from China, next the converts that they make in the schools. Finally, they have established a self-perpetuating core of trained Communist dedicantes in the schools. It is one of the hard facts of life.

True, perhaps, sound economic policies and progressive social legislation, will slowly dissolve this grounds of discontent and render sterile all further breeding in the schools. But, unfortunately, very far from that happening, as I see the problem, we are going to be faced in the next five to ten years, with more massive involvement in military expenditure, military adventures, all carefully interlocked to bring down not just Malaysia, but the whole of South East Asia, into a quagmire of economic stagnation, breeding revolution.

The ultimate answer to the Communist challenge is a better life without the Communist methods. Whether finally we achieve that answer depends on so many imponderables, one of them being how we survive confrontation and the other being whether we have the will and capacity to integrate our peoples into one Malaysian nation. But for the time being this is a sector of Communist recruitment that must be contained.

It may sound something quite outside this world, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to those of us who have not experienced, as some of our friends in the Barisan Sosialis in Singapore undoubtedly have, of the intensity with which revolution is being pursued by young men. I cannot but concede their dedication. I am convinced that they must be met with equal resolve, and I am convinced that they should not be let loose amongst the innocent.

The problem is that, in one pocket of secondary schools there is already, as I have said, a self-generating hard core. We have now embarked on an education policy which will remove the barriers between the language streams: the Chinese educated is now being given refresher courses to enter English language universities, to give them a way out, to be doctors, dentists, engineers, scientists, teachers, men of art, science, the humanities, to fulfill themselves, to

seek consummation for their talent in our society. As we lift these barriers, so the Communist caucus cross the barriers.

I don't think it is possible to stop it altogether, nor do I think it desirable. Communism, like so many other things, is best met when one knows it and gets immune to it. I believe the policy of complete isolation from Communist thought, tactics, thinking, policy, is a dangerous thing. One day the windows will come open and like the South Sea islanders, when they first meet the tuberculis bacilli, we will all perish. It is better to let these things come in gradual doses, containable, enough to generate a counter toxin in our wholesome society. This is a calculated risk. Whether it fails or it succeeds depends upon the sensitivity with which the policy is implemented.

Let me give an illustration: As part of our policy to encourage intelligent and ambitious Chinese Middle school graduates, to seek fulfillment, many sought to study law in the University of Singapore. One of them was the sister of Mr. Lim Chin Siong, a distinguished family, distinguished unfortunately by their devotion to a wrong cause. Several of his brothers have been similarly incarcerated. The girl applied for a bursary. The girl as such, in spite of her background, had not shown participation, active participation, in Communist

activities. A bursary was granted, a careful watch is kept of the consequences. All so far has gone well.

Another girl known to be a perennial student sought first to read as an undergraduate, then having graduated, sought to remain as a research student. Her security record left nobody in any doubts as to the professional purposes for which she was left in the University. She gathered around her a coterie of young, innocent girls, who were finally going around recruiting free teachers to teach detainees the law -- so much were they convinced by a professional dedicate. The young lady, not so very long ago, has recanted -- no doubt as a result of enforced solitude, and the results of the Referendum, the elections in Singapore and the elections in Malaya. These are the persons the Bill must seek to exclude.

The admixture between the highly politically conscious and organised from the Chinese Middle Schools together with the not-so-highly politically conscious and organised in the English language stream must go on. They will find their own level. It is part of the inevitable process of living in one society that as one sector generates a great deal of dedication, drive, for purposes which are not agreed to by other sectors, so similarly dedication and drive is generated in the other sectors to counter the direction in which the first intend is to take the country.

Sir, we have tried in the last few years to anticipate some of these problems, but unfortunately, there is prevailing attitude in our society that security, the survival of the nation, is a matter for the government alone. If we dislike such laws which empower the executive to check what normally should be the preserve of semi-autonomous bodies, then those in responsible positions must discharge their share of responsibility.

Let me explain. The Member for Batu made great play of the resignation of the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Singapore. I don't regret his resignation. I gave instructions to our government representative that his resignation be accepted, for these reasons. It was at the suggestion of the Singapore government that a special pre-university course was set up in the University of Singapore to take in Chinese Middle School graduates. Give them a refresher course, let them go on to medicine, the law, the sciences, the humanities. Before his assumption of the Vice-Chancellorship, I took the trouble to explain this to him at dinner, informally, and to point out to him why first this is in the long term interests of the country, offering outlets for talents and ability and drive and ambition. But at the same time, I pointed out to him the dangers of the wrong people who will also be wanting to get in and expand their breeding ground. Unfortunately, subsequently, he with the full support of the Senate, who

consisted largely of expatriate professors -- no doubt, men of learning and scholarship who have been properly recommended by the Inter-University Council to occupy these important positions in our seat of learning, they refused to consider security objections and the first infection commenced, some three years, perhaps nearly four years ago. I am not saying that all of them were dangerous men. But I do suggest that the fact that subsequently in very time the Students Union and the Socialist Club were all being manipulated by this small group that got through, was eloquent testimony of the fact that our appraisal of their drive and dedication was not misplaced. These facts have to be faced.

I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when I had this argument with the Vice Chancellor that the business of the Government is just to give money to the University for it to do whatever it deems proper. And I suggested to him, for instance that if the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge was on the one hand asking for grants and on the other hand, harbouring a Pontecorro (Italian professor in England who defected to Russia with atomic secrets), things must come to a head. The fact that there is no acceptance of responsibility of those in high position, although they know that unless they play their part in the preservation of the State, then it is impossible to work it within the rules. This, unfortunately, is the position.

The easier and better way would be conscious checks by the University authorities working in the national interests to see that the University is not undermined. Who can know better than they, the staff, who have to supervise the students, day in, day out, about the security risk of the individuals involved. But when they abdicate their responsibility, and they say "No, it has nothing to do with us, if you wish you pass legislation to this effect", there the matter rested. And that was where the Minister for Home Affairs came in.

I would myself not have used the word 'Suitability Certificate'. Many people who are not fellow travellers, who are honest, who are concerned about the future of this country, who do not wish to see the Communists succeed, are doubtful in their minds as to the integrity with which the provisions of this amendment will be implemented. That is the crux of the matter. Will the Minister be infallible, and his instruments be beyond reproach? If the targets that this amendment sought to achieve clearly defined, then there may not have been the same degree of concern. I think the concern arises because of the ambiguity of the terms used: "Suitability". For what purpose? It has even been suggested to me that this makes it possible now for Chief Education Officers to get rich. I am astounded to believe that there prevails among the populace at large a cynicism as to the integrity with which amendments of this nature will be implemented. I do not believe this for one moment, knowing the Minister for

Home Affairs, and having had knowledge and experience of the instruments through which he is working and has to work. But I do suggest to him that nothing is to be lost by taking this Bill into Select Committee, meeting all the objections, all the God-fearing and public spirited gentlemen who have been quoted at great length by the Member for Batu, Cuepacs, M.T.U.C., United Chinese Schools Association, the Graduate Society, the Guild of Graduates, all under umbrella of Cardinal Newman's illustrious principles of a University.

The argument must be joined. Is it necessary? First they must be convinced. Are there all the safeguards to prevent abuse? I suggest to the Minister for Home Affairs to ask the Member for Ipoh, instead of standing up and in this Chamber and airily just mention the possibility of an appeal to somebody other than the Minister, which appeal he regards with contempt, that he ought to put in a specific amendment, and indeed, should spend the time and energy to make it worth his while to put in a sound amendment which the Minister may find hard to resist. Then perhaps the country is indebted to the Member for Ipoh. But if the Member for Ipoh has really not given this matter the thought that it deserves, and put pen to paper on a specific amendment, then the Minister for Home Affairs would have scored his point.

I, therefore, propose, Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the end of the second reading of this Bill, under Standing Order 54, to move that the Bill be sent to a Select Committee. My reasons are as follows :

First, a good case cannot suffer as a result of public debate;

Second, I believe improvements can be made in the Bill to sharpen the definition both in Bill and as a guide to its implementation, the Communist subversion; and

Third, provided the machinery for it could stand the strain, that the student so excluded should have the right to put up his case to an advisory body akin to that which already exists for those detained under the Internal Security Act.

One cannot prove that a specific individual, if let into a particular University, would in the course of two or three years generate that degree of harm as to cause a lowering of the standards of discipline of the University. But the executive having studied a systematic pattern of behaviour over the years can be fairly certain that if a fair proportion of such students at gathered together in one institution then in no time at all they would have usurped the authority of the University. It is unfortunate but it is true. It has happened in Nanyang. It may

happen again. At this moment the University authority is in good heart. The professors have breathed a sigh of relief.

Earlier, the Minister recounted how the students union was manipulated, how the Communists achieved perpetual dominance. But let me give an example of the length to which the control of a small group of students had led them. Professors are even asked, why so many students have failed. Graduates who are themselves top security risks have made a point of staying on in lowly paid jobs as assistant administrators in order to increase the grip they have on the institution. Regrettable but true. This not something that could be flushed away with one purgative castor-oil, however, efficacious cannot fight something which is endemic. It is a continuous and continuing process, a battle in which too much of the heavy hand means one loses out on the neutrals and the liberals, in which case the objective, namely to deny a mass following to the Communists is lost.

On the other hand, absence of all control and complete democratic free play, in a situation where the government is unable to intimidate with the ultimate, but the other side can, leads to unfair competition.

Let me again give an illustration: One can find any number of persons standing up, denouncing -- formerly the Singapore Government whenever it had to take unpleasant decisions. Now these same persons are a bit more wary about

denouncing the Central Government. What is the reason? I suggest because they understand that denouncing a group of liberal-inclined intellectuals products of Western education is a fairly safe practice. But to open fire, denigrating and decrying a group of not such open-minded persons, people prone to act on the basis of an eye for an eye, presents these people with occupational hazards. So they do not embark on wild and often unfounded allegations.

But, however, ominous and terrifying the organs of oppression open to the Central Government, it is nothing compared to what the Communists have got. Theirs is the ultimate. You challenge me then you die, and you die painfully. In that situation who stands up to challenge them? This is the problem, why for a long time in Singapore, very few stood up to challenge them, and why, as it appeared more and more likely, that they were not going to inflict painful deaths so easily, more and more people made their stands.

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This is part of the problem the SUPP Member from Sarawak faces. I noticed in supporting the Member for Batu, he was extremely brief and concise. And indeed, he has good reasons to be. He must know the ultimate that we are faced with. But nobody in this Chamber really knows what is the ultimate answer to all these cross currents of forces that will decide our fate in Malaysia.

I thank the Member for Ipoh for bringing in the Member for Johore Tenggara. He wanted the Member for Home Affairs to take action against the Member for Johore Tenggara. The Member for Johore Tenggara wants to take action against me. And whilst so many of these things are now being said in jest -- and they are still, I hope, said in jest -- one could so easily cross over the point of no return. Then these things are no longer so jocular. The survival of the Malaysia that we want, of the good things in Malaysia, tolerance, harmonious relationship, the sense of practical accommodation, must ultimately depend upon the leaders that have been thrown up in Malaysia, how they exercise their positions of authority, how they exercise their discretion vested in their hands.

If the Minister for Home Affairs were to be brain grafted and the thinking and the feeling of some other members on the Alliance side were to be put in, then, of course, different considerations apply. But we have to start on the basis of good faith, in this case, good faith, which I could personally testify to, having had period of working together, over security problems of Malaysia. We have divergent points of view, but at least we conceded each other one basic common factor: a desire to see a non-Communist Malaya, as it then was, now a non-Communist Malaysia.

An openness of mind to investigate other means of checking Communist growth and expansion, of a combination of both the intellectual argument, the social and economic programme, together with the prohibitive proscription. So we must keep on experimenting with combinations and permutations to reach at any one time what is considered the best in the circumstances. It is my hope, although I know the Minister was not so originally disposed, that the Bill be processed in Select Committee, and let those who have issued statements, public-spirited men, let them come forward, let them be convinced or let them be exposed if they are not sincere. I say this because I know that the clauses of the Bill, the provisions that it incorporates, will not be required for use for quite a number of months, both the University of Singapore, the University of Malaya, Nanyang, Ngee Ann or the Polytechnic. The last batch, from last year's graduates of H.S.C. have already got in. We are concerned with the next batch, and every batch after that and I suggest that with gestation, fears can be allayed, the Bill can be sharpened as a better instrument for meeting the purposes which the Minister himself has so clearly defined in his speech.

13th July, 1964.