SPEECH BY SINGAPORE'S PRIME MINISTER,

MR. LEE KUAN YEW, DURING COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY DEBATE ON ESTIMATES FOR THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING IN THE DEWAN RA'AYAT ON 18TH DECEMBER, 1964.

It was not my intention to take the opportunity of participating in the debate under the Ministry of the Hon. Minister of Information and Broadcasting. But having listened to the speech by the Member for Seremban Barat, I think he has generated sufficient stimuli for us to bring forth bigger and wider issues, the unspoken premises that have shrouded this Chamber for the last fortnight. First, let us get down to fundamentals: Is this an open or is this a closed society? Is it a society where men can preach ideas -- the novel, unorthodox, heresies, established Churches and established governments -- where there is a constant contest for men's hearts and minds on the basis of what is right, of what is just, of what is in the national interests or is it a closed society where the mass media, the newspapers, the journals, publications, TV Radio, either by sound or by sight, or both sound and sight, men's minds are fed with a constant drone of sycophantic support for a particular orthodox political philosophy. That is the first question we ask ourselves.

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And let me preface my remarks with this, that it is not only in Communist countries where the mass media is used to produce the closed mind because the closed society must produce the closed mind. I believe that Malaysia was founded, if you read its Constitution, it was founded as an open society, constituting peoples of various communities, of various religions, of various languages, of varying political beliefs in which the will of the majority will prevail, and in which a large dissenting minority will not be crushed and intimidated and silenced.

I believe in an open society and for that reason we are here. Not to be abused, abuse carries us nowhere, not to be intimidated, for the Hon. Members on the other side, like ourselves, are brave and gallant men not to be easily intimidated by words . What is at stake are the lives of 11 million people and foolish words uttered either in anger or in haste can bring about great trials and tribulations all round.

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Sir, I welcome the speech by the Member for Seremban Barat, because I agree with him in some of his sentiments. I would like to see his speech published, I would like to see mine stimulated and debate provoked and truth refined and crystalised out of the conflict of different evidence and views. I, therefore, welcome every and any opportunity, of a chance to agree or to dissent

in order that out of thesis comes syntheses; this as the major premise, anti-thesis, synthesis, so we progress. But what really does happen. The Member says the Straits Times is a P.A.P. paper, the kiss of Judas for any political party. I welcome every opportunity to meet members of the opposition and so do members of my party, over the radio, over television, University forums, public rallies. We never run away from the open encounter. If your ideas, your views cannot stand the challenge of criticism then it is too fragile, it is not sturdy enough to last. I have been, since Malaysia at three symposiums in the University of Malaya. Sir, I hope the time will come when I will see more than just opposition members in these symposiums. Invariably Government members are absent and so the Straits Times, like the other papers, were unable to report them. And, of course, nor were the oppositions members, like the Member for Batu, reported. And he appeared, right or wrong, he was prepared to propound his thesis, to take the knocks, but a University which dares not even hold a public debate and calls the debate a symposium, I think, needs a bit of livening up and, I think, it needs encouragement from people in high places. Surely, if their version of the democratic society is worth fighting for and dying for, and not just getting the British and Gurkha soldiers to die for, then it is worth putting it across to the young men and women growing up in our university, the people who will give our nation intellectual content and drive.

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Sir, we have been in this Chamber now for over a year. We were new boys when we came in last September. I think we now know the technique, the form, the styles and we were prepared to adjust. This is a different form in a different forum, in a different context against the broader canvass. We played it on a low key. The piano was muted, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in order that we shall first get the measure of each other and the measure of our wills, areas of agreement and areas of disagreement. What has happened? There is now a set pattern and a set technique, from the press controlled by them -- vituperation, vilification is the daily bread to hold the faithful. We read it, we watch it, with a lot of patience, otherwise this thing will not hold, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Valification, falsification, vituperation is the daily bread they feed a lot of innocent minds on, to sour up a whole nation. We do not make wild allegations. There is a Commission of Enquiry which has been appointed, gazetted in October, the day before a motion tabled by my colleagues and myself was to be debated. It has not even sat. The secretary has not been appointed. Perhaps this Chamber may be dissolved before this Commission of Enquiry even begins its work, the open debate, the careful, scrupulous scrutiny of facts as against fiction.

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And in this Chamber the same technique, not the big men, they are gentle figures, but from the small fry, the hatchet men, howls vituperation and abuse. Is this the open encounter? In this the democratic system in which ideas compete for ascendany, not brawn or the strength of one's phalanx, but the ideas -- they

cross frontiers, they have brought men into space -- and if we try to keep our men rooted, glued to the ground, fixed in an orthodox political society which resists change, the world will pass us by. One day it will come down like a house of cards. It has not the resilience, the sturdiness, the stamina.

I would like to end on this note, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Over the last six months, the whole country senses a growing air of a slight, I would not say oppression or suppression, I think we want to be honest ... everybody understands -- certain things are sensitive things, best not to report them. Well, perhaps for a while, but the human mind is a very sensitive instrument and it makes its adjustment. The Minister for Information and Broadcasting will remember the days when the Japanese ran their newspapers, everyday they talked of another great victory, Midway Islands, great victory, everybody knew their ships must have been sunk. The mental adjustment processes must have started. The word of mouth in the coffee-shop carried more weight than the radio or the newspaper controlled by the Japanese, their ministers.

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I prefer to believe that those in authority are incapable, temperamentally incapable, of trying to run a closed society -- some in the lower echelons have shown tendencies -- but I am glad to say that in the higher ranks, temperamentally, they have not got that absolutely closed mind to go through

ruthlessly to the end with suppression of the truth, the deliberate falsification of facts. Therefore whatever we believe ultimately the truth must come out. If the budget was right, how many rallies you can have, it is still right.

Barisan Sosialis, they have given up in this Chamber. We used to invite them, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to Radio Singapore and Television Singapore -- they came with great zest and zeal -- equal time on an equal status, idea for idea, one intellectual blow for an intellectual retort. It went on for two years. They had cadres, they had big voices, they had big microphones, they had a lot of guts too, but their thoughts were wrong. They wanted to do something which was inimical, detrimental to the people's interest, and that message went through until finally none of them dared to turn up to open invitations to Radio and Television. These are live, not recorded, over the air for the world to hear. If we are right, if we believe in these things, that they are good for the people, are we not able to convince them in the end? If, in fact, as has been alleged that my colleagues and I in the P.A.P. -- one newspaper feeds it everyday -- we are anti-Malaya, we oppress them, we drive them out from the city. We are patient men. This is a battle that goes on for as long as we are alive. We are prepared to meet it at every turn and prove in the end by results. The final consummation is when the man who is told that he is oppressed finally finds it in his heart to say, in secret, "I support you, I vote for you in secret" Mr. Speaker, Sir. He might be

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intimidated in the open but in secret, in the solitude of his own conscience, he says, what that man was saying, what the Government, what the party wanted to do is right. So you see ultimately the closed society must lead to open ballot, not the closed ballot; the open society, open contest of wills will close down secret ballots, that is what we are committed to.

Those who want to run this, the gentle twisting of the arm -- I do not want to defend Dato Leslie Hoffman -- I cannot give him a Datoship, I do not have one -- I will tell the Member for Seremban Barat, when I saw the Straits Times in the old days I do not see Dato Hoffman, I called the proprietor to see me, Mr. Simmons and whom he represents. No, let us be honest, he is not what he is supposed to be. I would love to see the open argument, more of the Ministers' speeches, in order that we can have just one tenth of the space to reply. I welcome every editorial that says that we are advocating class warfare, repeated by the Member for Seremban Barat, because every time that lie is repeated they have to keep up the pretense of the open society, the open argument to give me three inches in which to make one simple point and so the process will go on relentlessly. This is a test of will and a test of ideas and ideas cannot be intimidated -- men can be. But as long as we run the open society with a secret ballot, a closed ballot, eventually the men for whom all this is designed will also not be intimidated. I said at the opening that those in authority, in high places,

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are temperamentally unsuited and I will say why, because to really go through with this -- and I have seen it in some of the countries I have gone through -- you must go through with right to the very end and finally it ends up with the open ballot where you are asked to go there and say "please vote". I went to such one country in Africa recently. I mean the closed society does not take place only under Communist regimes, Mr. Speaker, Sir. You are given the chance to express your support. In this particular instance, nobody wanted to go because everybody knew he was under scrutiny. They were taken there and put there and lined up for their saviour in order to express confidence because that must be the end result. I put this thought to member opposite. Every idea, every criticism, we accept. If we deserve them we deserve and we will suffer if we do not, we shall rebut them, matter of time, provided it is a open society still. Once it is a closed society, then it is a different matter. Different considerations come into play with very different consequences.

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I think members opposite have made in the last eight months since April 25 the biggest series of mistakes any party could have done. All the cards were stacked in their hands. The people were for Malaysia solidly, anti all those who wanted to sell out Malaysia. The people voted in the Government for a progressive programme and policy. That Government has a stack of good cards

to play and some very unthinking people went loosening up screws, and bolts and nuts. And now the engine is rattling. That is serious.

Let's be honest amongst ourselves and in this Chamber many things can be said which members dare not mention or whisper outside. This is a privileged Chamber. Here let us be honest to ourselves. The next time after what has happened the issues are a matter of life and death. It is no longer whether you are going to give comprehensive schools, increase it for another two years or three years and then come back and say, "Good Lord, it cost $200 million, let us cut it down to $99 million. Let's postpone it because we have not the schools or the teachers." Those are not the issues. They have triggered off something basic and fundamental, Malaysia. Who does it belong to? To Malaysians. Who are Malaysians? I hope I am, Mr. Speaker, Sir. But sometimes sitting in this Chamber, I doubt whether I am allowed to be a Malaysian. This is the doubt that hangs over many minds and the next contest if this goes on, and I hope it doesn't. The next contest, the drawing of the lines will be a very different one. So I beseech members of this House to pause and think of the immeasurable consequences of their actions. Once emotions are set into motion, men pitted against men, not on the basis of interests and ideas, class warfare, that will not break Malaysia. No danger of that. Not the slightest risk of it. But everybody in this House knows without it having been uttered, what kind of warfare will split

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the nation right down from top to bottom and unzip Malaysia. Everybody knows it. I do not have to say it. It is an unspoken word. The press knows it, the public knows it. Everybody in the coffee shop speaks it. But we in this Chamber it is taboo. Why? Make-believe. But for how long? Really even the make-believe is wearing thin, I say let's pause and ask ourselves.

We are not interested in the Straits Times. The Straits Times is one media, 140,000 copies multiplied by 5. I do not think it is even multiplied by 5, probably multiplied by 3 because all the big bosses read it and one man buys one copy, probably readership of 200,000 or 300,000. There are in Malaysia about 5 million to 6 million adults, 18 above who can begin to think and read. The Straits Times is irrelevant. I am talking of the principle of the open society, the open debate, ideas, not intimidation, persuasion not coercion. I would like, because I cannot coerce, you see the Member for Seremban Barat should remember this.

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The instruments for coercion, I am not saying that they are being used, surely .....

Sir, if the basic fundamental we ask ourselves when we discuss the onerous duties of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting is whether his

duties are to produce closed minds or open minds because these instruments -- the mass media, TV Radio -- can produce either the open minds receptive to ideas and ideals, a democratic system of life, or closed and limited. But I know that the open debate is a painful process for closed minds. I understand that. Yes, I understand the Member for Seremban Barat very well indeed. But let me make this one point, that 5 million adult minds in Malaysia cannot be closed. Definitely not in the lifetime of the people in authority. It is not possible because whatever the faults of the colonial system, and there were many and I fought them, they generated the open mind, the inquiring mind: Why? What for? Who? When? How? And I say the question every Malaysian asks himself is: this time and the next time the next contest: What for? For Malaysia. For whom? For Malaysians. Who are Malaysians? I am. And on that basis fundamental decisions will be made.

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The argument has gone into a new dimension. It slips gear. The clutch has been thrown, the car has gone down. Unless you get it back into gear, this is the fundamental, as this thing careers along, we ask ourselves. What for? For Malaysia.

"Finally, for me." That is what the voters say. "For me, for I am a Malaysian and I love Malaysia. I want a fair life. I want a fair society. He who

provides the ideas for them wins." I gave the floor to all the others, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Enche Hanafiah bin Hussain (Member for Jerai):

Mr.Speaker, Sir, in spite of what the Hon. Member for Singapore has just said the impression I gained is that he still thinks that the Straits Times do carry a lot of weight because I have no doubt also that the Straits Times is very frightened of the P.A.P. His reporter in this House, Sir, would apparently do anything at the behest of the Party. This deal is confirmed by what happened in this House just as the Hon. Member was going to speak. Order went out to the Hon. Member behind him, passed on to the Hon. Member to his right and up doubled Hon. Member to make sure that the reporter there, Sir, Mr. Baldhead, comes down quickly to take down the note.

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Mr.Lee Kuan Yew: On a point of clarification. Mr. Speaker, Sir, every word that I utter is on the record in this Chamber and outside and usually on tape in order that there shall be no argument about this and therefore I am not ashamed that what I say should be reported. It is meant to be reported. I stand, fight, live and die by what I say.

Enche Hanafiah bin Hussain: I was just trying, Sir, to explain the close connection between the P.A.P. and the Straits Times, that is all, Sir.

Mr. Lee Kuan Yew: On a point of information before the Hon'ble Member commits another blunder. The baldheaded gentleman does not work for the Straits Times, he works for me.

Enche Hanafiah bin Hussain: Thank you.

18th December, 1964.

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