TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS OF THE SINGAPORE PRINTING EMPLOYEES' UNION ON 17TH OCTOBER, 1965, HELD AT THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Just now listening to Mr. Devan Nair whispering to Mr. Simmons down below, I felt that all of us have graduated -- graduated from high school, graduated from university, and graduated in the hardest test of all; in life.

I remember Mr. Simmons ... And I remember when he had knuckle-dusters on when I went to see him in the lawyer's office in the first Straits Times strike. It was in 1953 or 1954. That strike was broken because he had the knuckle -dusters on. The Governor was in charge and the whole thing was 'unplayable', because if you go into the ring, and you know that Joe Louis on the other side has knuckle-dusters, then you have to say, "Well, all right, call it off."

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But over the years, Joe Louis got old; the young man grew up, grew the muscles. The people of Singapore took over; the Governor moved out; we

moved into position. Now Mr. Simmons is on the other side of the ring; a Joe Louis not so young, but full of wisdom and very wisely saying, "Knuckle-dusters notwithstanding, let us all be friends because we want to live."

This is a theme which is very much in my mind because the touchstone of our policies is survival. There are people who believe -- and this is the reason why they booted us out -- they believed that by booting us out, they would have the squeeze on us. They would owe us no obligations; they would not have to buy our stuff and they thought they could sell their stuff to us.

Life is not that way. The last time, we tried a reasonable way: you know, in 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963. They were a selling their stuff to us; no tariff. We could not sell our goods to them because they had a tariff.

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This was one-way traffic. But at that time, we said, "Look, too much is at stake: the survival, the future. Lump it; we will be patient." So we fought the reasonable way: argued; used logic, reason; history, geography, economics. Finally, we got merger, Malaysia, common market.

I am seriously told by my colleagues, both the Minister for Finance and Dr. Goh who acted for him when Mr. Lim was away in Jamaica and Washington ... We have been doing our calculations about this 40 percent which we paid for

two years, and over paid. But we said, "Never mind." And now they admit, "Yes, you pay 40 percent because there is common market." Actually, it ought to be 30 percent.

And you, know, one minesweeper which we had -- a minesweeper mind you, it is not a motor-boat which you can put in your pocket or hide in a garage -- that minesweeper is missing! What can you do with people like that? And we say, Look, what more do they want?" And they say, "Yes, yes, we will have a common market, this, that," and they also say "Pay".

My colleagues and I read these reports. We are methodical people. A colleague may be in Jamaica; he may be in Washington, but he writes down this report and I read it. This report says, "Conversation held, so on, so on, so on. .. Chap says we must pay." So my colleague said, "On what basis do we pay? You tell me where in the world you have a common market and we have to pay?

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The chap says, "Never mind: you pay." So our colleague got all the experts, and the officials who were there with their Minister and he said, "Can you tell me the basis, the rationale, on which you say, 'I pay you'?" The chaps said, "No, we never heard about it. Who said you must pay?" "Your Minister says, ‘Must pay’" And they said, "Oh, we didn't know that!

So, at the end of it all, you come to the conclusion, "Ah, what is it all about?"

It is not we alone who profit by common market. They profit. It is not the Germans alone who profit by Common Market: the French profit; so do the Belgians; so do the Italians -- all the Big Six in the common market profit from it.

And here is one Government saying, "I don't care if you have 43 to 44 percent of the purchasing power. I want to sell to you; you can't sell to me." I say, What is this all about?" So they say, "Right, remove quotas." We removed quotas; they removed quotas. As they removed quotas, they slapped on tariffs. This is very funny!

I will tell you the impact of this. We import a tin of abalone from Australia at $1.50. It goes across the Johore Causeway and they say "Tariff". We say, "Right, pay." The invoice says $1.50. The chap says, "No. My estimation is that this costs $8.-. You pay an invoice $8.-" What does it mean? You just want to put screws on me?

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Some people think that Singapore is a delicate situation, that we are delicate creatures ... For so long -- from 1950 to 1963 -- we fought, we preached

merger, Malaysia rational solutions to long term problems, so much so that they believe now that without merger, without Malaysia, they have got us right under their thumbs.

They are wrong. If they think this is a chicken's neck which they can twist, then I say, "Boy ..." I once read Winston Churchill and he said, "Yeah ... What a chicken and what a neck!" And I say, “Right, if that it is the way you feel about it, then until you are interested, let's forget it."

They want to set up a motor-car assembly plant, I understand. They are going to set it up all by themselves. They say they have got about 70 percent of the market. I quickly rang up the Registrar of Vehicles and asked, "How many cars do we have; how many cars do they have, how many cars in Sabah and Sarawak? So he sent the figures up. You know, nearly 100,000 cars registered as passenger motor-cars. So the chap is going to assemble cars and sell to me, and he is going to export....? Where is he going to assemble them? In Petaling Jaya? That is a very reasonable place! Where do the ships come in with all the spares? Port Swettenham? It will be jammed up.

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The first thing I learnt is geography -- which has been affirmed over the years as I read of all the trials and tribulations in Port Swettenham -- is that the

world turns from west to east; so the sun appears to rise in the east, and to set in the west. Because it turns, spins that way, the waters of the Pacific Ocean -- this is my geography and I scored an "A" in my School Certificate -- sweep down the southernmost point of the continent of Asia. The large ocean sweeps down the southern tip, and scours the coast-line of the southern tip: that is, Singapore and the Straits of Johore .... You know, "scours"? It is when you take a steel brush and you wash your pots and pans: that means 'scouring' ..... And it takes all the deposits and goes up the Straits of Malacca and then as it goes by, it drops all the deposits along the coast. So you have got long, still patches like Malacca, Port Dickson and Port Swettenham. Constantly you take big dredges to pull away what nature drops there. This is a test in endurance. When we were little boys, we used to do this and say, "Look, let's try this one for size." And let us see who has more stamina and who lasts longer. They have got the hinterland and so on. Let us suppose you set up your factory in Petaling Jaya. You know, they are going to make batteries. In fact, we make the batteries. But they will start a factory making batteries, and we are going to buy them when we are making them! I don't see the sense in all this!

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All right: a car having been made, assembled, how many cars are you going to sell that side? It is not worth the assembler making the car! You are going to sell to Sabah and Sarawak? Where do you export from? You put it on

the railroad and down to Jurong... You know, there is a railway siding now; we have just put the rails -- it goes through to the dockyard in Jurong on to the ship, and then off it goes to Sabah and Sarawak and the whole of Southeast Asia.

Do you think we are going to give it? ..... That we put in $20,000,000 on that railway for no rhyme or reason, so that they will ... Without that 17-mile strip of railway, nothing goes to Jurong harbour. So, they are going to go to Port Swettenham again! So I say. "Well, all right: you fight nature; you go on." And we will wait and see.

But meanwhile this is a lesson in survival. Forget all about bonuses and this, that and the other for the next two years. We have really got to pull ourselves up by the boot straps. Those already in jobs are lucky because we have got our labour laws and our labour relations in such a way that nobody can deliberately retrench and then employ new workers at lower rates. It is not possible. The whole thing is intermeshed with agreements registered in the Arbitration Court ..... Even if it weren't, somebody will turn up at the Ministry for Labour and see my friend Mr. Jek and he will be running around and his inspectors will be running around. So, it is all right.

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But for the new ones, particularly unskilled and semi-skilled workers..... I say, "Don't start on the basis that Singapore owes me a living, unskilled labour, $4.55 minimum." You know, $4 and 55 cents: minimum. Any chap who takes a broom and sweeps our roads gets $4.55. On Sunday, it is double pay; and that is $9 and 10 cents. On public holidays -- I am the man that fought for it -- there is triple pay! One day's pay for a holiday, and double pay for working on a holiday, so it is triple pay; $13.65. ..... You watch the wage-rates now, of Hong Kong and of Japan: they have gone up. Ten years ago, our per capita income was higher than Japan's. Today, they are overtaking us. We are just equal to them, and they are overtaking us.

Ten years ago, Hong Kong labour was half our price. Today, Hong Kong skilled labour -- I am talking of unskilled -- is now surpassing us.

What does it mean? It means that until you break through, you can't have your labour running around doing foolish things. I was on the side of labour because I left the management was really squeezing it out of us. So we waited. And we said. "Right. Metal Box has got a contract. Well, we will wait." The Contract is delivery by March. Then, claims go up in September. By December, 'go slow' begins. The employer rocks away because the deadline can't be met in March. So eventually, the employer caves in -- he has to, or he has to pay penalties. All that was fair game then.

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But in this situation, whom we have first to show them that we can get on without them, I cannot have that. A man comes in, and he says, "Look, I am sinking in $5,000,000 in this. And I only break even after three years. Then, after breaking even three years, I begin to make profits by selling overseas" ..... And overseas deliveries have always got a time-clause: if you are late, you have a penalty to pay. He must be sure that the labour does not let him down.

So, we give a five-year limit to all our pioneer industries. We have got to think along these lines. We have got to break through.

This is a place with tremendous skill, with the capacity to learn the keenness to learn. I have been to many places in the world. I have seen twenty to thirty new conference halls and building in thirty to forty different countries. I have seen bigger ones than our Trade Union House. The biggest ones I saw were in Moscow, and they were really built to impress: the university goes up 30 stories, in the heart of Moscow, in the wedding-cake style.

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But, out of the corner of your eye, you watch the quality of the finish -- whether the doors click when you close or whether you have got to give it an extra push. When you open the door, does it open smoothly or is it sticky, and

then you hear a creak? It is a matter of quality of workmanship. There is one simple test for the quality of skill. Inevitably, in your journeys, you must visit the toilet. And you watch the wash-basins, and I have seen this ... Even in a very grand building, if you look at the wash-basins; you may find that the pipe has been put through a hole where the basin did not intend it to have a hole! That is the first point. And you say, "I wonder why. Is it because the workman did not know how to bend the pipe, or was it becase he decided it was easier this way ... Just make one hole!"

And watch the tiles: the glazed tiles by the side of the wall. It is a difficult business to join them.

Right at this moment, I have got tiling going on in my house. I watched it just now before I came. And I said to myself, "My God, this place has got it!" You know, little tiles, square just like this ... The basin was already stuck .. The last tile is half-an-inch from the basin. If it were any other place, they would just have said, "Say, just put a bit of paint and forget it." But they chipped off a half inch of tile all along, seven pieces, and then completed the square. And I said, "Boy this place has got it!"

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If they think they can squat on a people that has got that capacity, they have made the gravest mistake of their lives. I know why they are doing this. They must do this. They want to slow down our pace so that their society -- a medieval feudal society -- can survive. Because if we surge forward at the rate we have been doing, in five to ten years there would have been an even greater disparity and contrast between an effective, open society and a closed, traditional society. Here, if you want to stand up or if you don't want to stand up, that is your business. But nobody crawls.

But this is what hurts them: fear. It is not so much envy as fear. They envy us yes, up to a point. But more important, they fear us: what an effective, efficient administration which is not clogged down and bogged down by corruption can do, an administration which, by its results, will convince million around us that it should similarly do likewise. This is what really goes deep into the marrow of their bones. Basically this was the reason they refused to co-operate even after merger, even after Malaysia, till in the end they said "Get out!"

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It is not that we didn't want to help. I asked, "What do you want? If you want to build buildings, schools, we have got plans....." You know, we simplify them. We simplify a school or a flat to a point where we repeat the same design, there is a basic design with alterations in colour and in arrangement so as to

break the monotony, but we reduce costs to a point where we build a school at about 40 percent their cost per school, per square foot of classroom. You can see some flashy schools around, but real and basic schools, how many have you got; what do they cost; how much do ours cost. We offered this. We said, "Look, the whole of our P.W.D., the whole of our Housing Board experience: for you." But, they were not interested.

What held them back? They could have advanced,. and moved into higher gear; revved, moved faster. They did not want it. Why? Because that would have set off a chain reaction that would have meant the end of the whole feudal system.

Why am I here? I am here because you voted for me. Why did you vote for me? There were many reasons, but if you are worse off, you will not vote for me. If you think somebody else can do better, some other group of men can do better, why should you vote for me? You'd better vote for the other fellow.

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The other side is different. Why do you vote for me? Because I am the boss man! Who says I am the boss man? I say I am the boss man! That is the end of the argument.

So any chap who come around and says, "Yes, we can be better," the chap says, "Lock him up: he is a subversive!" This is the real truth.

In the coffee shops they talk.... Everybody knew who caused the riots. Two riots took place in 1964..... It never took place in the whole history of Singapore on race lines ... The whole world also knew of this. But it appeared that the Government of Malaysia does not know ... So, a Commission of Enquiry was set up to enquire -- and it never got to work!

This make-belief can be carried to a point ... and it is being carried to a point now where we must prepare for all eventualities. If I believe they were sane, rational people, I will sit down ... as I did, for three weeks after the 9th of August ... I sat down and calculated, and I said, "Where do we go now? All right, independence...."

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Is any of our arguments why there should be merger and Malaysia wrong? I say, no. There was nothing wrong in the argument. There should be merger; there should be Malaysia, and Malaysia, should prosper and flourish with us in it.

But Malaysia as it is cannot prosper and cannot flourish unless we co-operate. That is the first truth. I take back nothing. I apologise for nothing, for having brought you into merger and Malaysia. It was right.

But we discovered they did not want to work it. That is the real truth. Because, by working it, the society moves on. People move away from all this bowing and scraping.

If we worked it, then that society will move on. We have got any friends from Africa amongst us. You ask them: is there any nation in the world, in Africa, Asia, wherever you like, where instead of moving forward, you reverse gear and move backwards? In the whole of Africa, tribal chiefs are going: they are all retired, pensioned -- they are all gone. I am told sometimes, they have got stools on which they sit which are ornately carved and painted in gold, some really of gold and inlaid with diamonds, jade and so on... Whoever owns the stool is chief. Now, it is, "Move out. I am chief." Who says you're chief?" And he says, "The people voted me in; out you go. I am there." So, the President moves in, with due ceremony.

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They said, why must I say, on the 6th of June at Malaysia Solidarity Convention rally here: "Time and history is on our side." Why must I make references to Maharajahs, who are pensioned off? I said: It is not true? Our

friends from India will tell us. The only Maharajahs who are of any value now are those who really work for a living. And there are good ones, too -- like the son of a Maharajah, Mr. Dinesh Singh, who is Deputy Foreign Minister. He would have been a Maharajah but for the Indian Republic coming into being. But he works for a living and I am quite sure it is better for him and it is better for Indians and for India. That is the crux of the matter. Some have been sacrificed. Logic, history, geography, economics, all have been sacrificed to preserve the orchid from wilting. But, can it really be preserved?

I am told that if you look at Lenin in his tomb in the Mausoleum, you can imagine that he just died yesterday. But you know you are looking at a dead thing. So you can do with butterflies too. When they are dead, you preserve them and you pin them up and sometimes you feel the gloss and bloom; the butterfly may actually, just have rested there. But it is dead.

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Now this is very much a live part of the world, and if you don't believe me, just take the map, draw a line from Kuala Lumpur to Saigon and see how far it is. You will see that Kuala Lumpur to Saigon is about 60 percent of the length from Kuala Lumpur to Bangkok. How do you survive?

While all this is being sorted out, I expect you to join me in this exercise for survival. I expect the unions to understand that this is a radically different situation. We can smack Mr. Simmons down flat, but after that what do we do? You tell me what we do. You will get exactly nowhere; nobody else will ever open a printing house, nobody will ever dream of bringing a rolling ... whatever it is, you know, one of these technicolour things which your can roll off the press... Chaps will say this is a mad place: if you bring the machine here, the machine will rust, you will have to sell it at quarter-price; all will be gone.

So, for two years, may be three, whilst the lessons sink home there, we must pull ourselves up by our boot straps, and we can. And today, as I told you, as I went home and I saw the extra bathroom done I said: My God, we will make the grade. I didn't supervise it. The thing was done, the price agreed, work was done, and I went back and every chip was in place; and as it turned the corner at a right angle, they chipped the mosaic tile and it broke into two halves and they pasted it up joined it like that, and it went smoothly around.

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I have been to other places where it is a job to tell the chap: Look, this is a trowel and a trowel is meant to do this, not to cut up with. The chap has never seen a trowel. The day before yesterday he was pushing the bullock-cart. But this is not such a place.

But in this radical situation, we have just to take deep breath and to hold ourselves however impatient, however angry we can be ... And I am really very angry about all this. The stupidity of it all: fifteen years of work down the sink. In one week-end, somebody pulled the stopped after one year of communal politicking and the whole thing went to waste. But never mind about that: anger does not help. Where do we go from here?

And I have calculated: we just be ourselves, progress ourselves, and, after two years, when all is well, I will say: Well, look, let me tell you what this is all about. Then, we will spell it out for them -- where they owe us something, and we owe them something. If they don't owe us anything, then we owe them nothing. Then we will say: "Cheerio, god luck to you. You are going to defend Sabah and Sarawak." That is a very good idea; please don't involve me...missiles from Djakarta and all that.... What is all this? I'll be friends with the Indonesians then.

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Mind you, this is all very foolish.....I have no intention of doing anything so silly. Before we do that, we had better calculate very quickly; but nevertheless, this is something which we can forget altogether. When everything is properly prepared, then we will say: "Look, do we owe you all this." Must we

be exposed to bombs, sabotage, threats of missiles, denounced as neo-colonialists and so on when we are nothing of the sort? Because we are helping to defend them and their regime, an antiquated regime.

I would like to end by saying this: we have been through a lot together. We have not changed, our purpose has not changed; the reasons why we did these things have not changed. But the situation has changed, and our methods must change. So for two years, maybe two-and-a-half, maybe three, bear with me: break through first. After that, we will spell it out for them what this is all about. But first, demonstrate to them: If you don't buy from Singapore... never mind, forget it. And we won't buy yours, which means quite a number of factories retrenched that side; and worse, quite a number in Johore will close down because the market was here, and our market subsidised their price in Malaya. Finally the logic of history, geography and economics will bring their full weight to bear.

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Right at this moment, they are in no position to respond to logic because they are fearful of logic. Every time you reason, you argue, they say: Please don't, you are making me go berserk. How does reason and logic make you go berserk? They say: Never mind. Everytime you point out that I am saying these things, you make me angry. I said, Maharajahs have all been pensioned off --

and that got them angry. I said: "Is it not true?" They said, "Never mind, because it is true, it is worse."

So you see, these are men in a position to be logical for the time being. So we will just leave them alone, except when we meet amongst ourselves; then we expect them to know that when we talk amongst ourselves, we don't whisper to each other: we talk freely like men, equals.

Afterwards when all this has settled down and they find that the neck of the chicken is the size of an elephant's and their hands are not equal to grasping that neck, then we say: we talk again. You never know...sometimes, it is the toss of the coin.

Devan Nair was supposed to be our Assemblyman for Moulmein; and you know why he was not in. Because he spend five years in British jails and according to our citizenship law, a man who was a Federation of Malaya citizen, which was what he was, must reside here 10 out of 12 years. They changed the law just before he qualified 10 out of 12 years; and the years he is in goal or in detention or in quarantine are not counted. So 5 years he was in goal, and that was not counted; and low and behold, during the 1964 elections in the Federation

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-- I was away -- my colleagues said: Let's have a go since they had a go -- 42 seats here, they wanted to knock us out -- we just field 9, to show them.

And we did show them. We showed them to a point that even though he was the only man who won, they said: Never again: you are not taking part. The name PAP is subversive now. Can you imagine it? Socialist Front although Communist, is not subversive, and the PAP is subversive! Where are we going?

It was the toss of the coin, and he is on the other side. The toss of the coin again, we are out, he is left behind.....

.....Have you seen the spaceship pictures on television?.....The man leaves the capsule, and he's outside the capsule. We feed him with a lifeline and we ask: Are you still there? The chap says: Yes, I am walking around. We say, Well, best of luck, please tell me what the world looks like; solve everything; then come back. It is a very unhappy position, particularly for the man inside the capsule, and I feel very much like the man in the capsule. I'd feel less unhappy if I were crawling round in space with him, because I will say: Well, anyway, it's Cheerio for you and for me. But now, I am in the capsule watching this chap from my window, I say: Where are you? He says, still around. And there is a knock on the capsule. But any moment, he can be cut adrift.

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But we have got courage, we have got gumption. If we stick this one out, we will win. Never believe that there is any Caesar great enough to issue an edict that can split these two territories for ever. It is not possible. And I looked around there and I went through the list of M.P.'s and I said: There is no Caesar. So I said; Well, it can't be done anyway. And so Devan may yet, from outside the capsule, do us a good turn.

Goodnight.

17th October, 1965.

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