

TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR.

LEE KUAN YEW, AT QUEENSTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

ON 10TH AUGUST, 1966.

Friends and Fellow Citizens,

I have seldom had an opportunity in an open meeting like this to speak English in the last few days because most of the places that I have been to have been Chinese-speaking, principally Hokkien-speaking. But, we are breeding a generation which will come from the schools. There are half a million pupils in our schools and every year, thirty to forty thousand are coming out from the schools – educated: they can read, they can write. But I hope they can also think – not just read and write. It is very important that you should be able to think.

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And, more and more of them are becoming multi-lingual. In twenty years' time, perhaps in 10 years' time, you will have a generation that is ambidextrous, equally at home whether it is Malay, the National Language, or Chinese or English. This is a must for this community.

I have emphasised this so often and I do not think you can over-emphasise this: that what we lack in numbers and size, we must make up for in quality.

This is most important: quality.

It is the young that will determine what happens to this society. And it is we and what we do now that determines what they can be.

It depends on the education we give them; the training they receive; the values that they are taught – what is good, what is bad; what should be done; what should not be done; whether you should have a soft society, fun-loving, pleasure-loving, weak, effete or whether you should have a rugged, robust, disciplined effective society, a hard society, a tough, rugged society ... You want to live your lives as free men in an open society, not as sycophants or worse, as serfs doing other people's bidding. Then, that is a different story. But if you want to live your own life, then you must be well-organised and you must have a tough society. And everybody must know that small though we may be, this place is not a digestible morsel.

Every year, we must use our time better than the average person uses it in this part of the world. And we can. What we have done in the past, we can improve and do better in the future.

I do not think there is anything more important than to breed a generation that is conscious of what it has and what it must do to preserve and improve upon what it has.

Do not take things for granted. Do not believe that all you have to do is go to school, pass examinations and that more houses will be built and that one day, you will buy a house on the instalment system and so things will just go on. Do not believe that!

All these things happen only because there is a hard framework which holds the whole thing together. There is a group of men sitting in little rooms, planning, thinking, analysing, watching figures, watching trends. And, all the time, we are two, three steps ahead of the problems. And the problems are becoming more and more manageable.

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Seven years ago, when we took office, we were building primary schools just to give the boys and girls a place in school. But we are now building secondary schools and no more primary schools because we have enough of them. And, fortunately, the population is not increasing as rapidly as it used to. So, we improve! We build secondary schools and, what is more, to every primary school and every secondary school we add a school hall, a school gymnasium. Because we must have a generation that is not only good at scoring on paper.

The system that we inherited from the British was lop-sided. Too much emphasis was laid on the examination and the paper qualification. We were, therefore, rearing a whole generation of softies, who are clever; who wore spectacles but who were weak from want of enough exercise, enough sunshine, and with not enough guts in them. That was all right for a British colony, because the officers came from England who had the necessary brawn and toughness. It was they who gave the orders and our people just executed them.

That is not good enough. We have to give our own people the orders. And you have to throw up a whole generation capable of that leadership, conscious of its responsibilities, jealous of its rights, not allowing anyone to bully it and push it around, prepared to stand up and fight and die. That kind of a

generation will endure till the end of time. And that is what we can do and will do.

I have been to three different places tonight, but I see nothing but children everywhere. You must see them because over 50% of Singapore are teenagers and babies. But, they are the more important 50%. When they are young, they can learn. They can absorb. If you go to the Adult Education classes to start learning Malay, English or Chinese, it is a real effort. The mind has hardened, the nerve-centres are all thickened. It is easier when they are young.

And we must make use of the asset that we have – an active vibrant, vital generation. We must nurture them, give them the stuffing that will make them men of girth and guts, with the vitality and the industry which already are there.

I am not worried. We are hard working. Go anywhere in Singapore and you see people always doing something. This is a good characteristic. It is a striving society. People are thrifty. They are keen to get on.

But there are weak points of which I am conscious. Physically, being too organised, and there not being enough playing-fields in the schools and in the urban areas, it is a soft generation, with not enough guts in it.

We must change it and change it straight away in the schools – with the teachers, with the principals, with the children. The school bands, the school cadet corps You know, I am more interested in them really, in the long run, because, we will be all right for 5, 10 years. There will be no trouble.

We have, during this time, British bases and defence arrangements. But, you cannot predict what is going to happen in 20 years' time. And in 20 years' time, we will have had a population of probably 4 million, perhaps 4½ million. And everyone of them must be a fighting digit. Everyone must know that this is a hard, tough society. Then only can we live in peace.

What you want is the organisation and the discipline. And, what is most important, the incentive. Everyone wants a good report card, good marks, and to win scholarships. In the past if you practised in the band or joined the police cadet corps or played volleyball, you were thought of as wasting time. That didn't score any marks. But we have changed all this now. Now, extramural activities are included in the report card, and marks are given and taken into account.

And, within 3 years of this National Day, in 1969, you will see a new generation march-past – a generation which is different. You cannot breed it too quickly. But, one year has shown what is possible. And, in three years, we will have a new system, a new generation with leaders of men able to look after themselves, with the brains, the guts and the industry. This is what we have to do. The future is what they will build on and we must give them that foundation.

Eventually, what happens in the long run depends upon how we solve our problems here. And the best way to ensure our survival and to ensure an enduring future is through a multi-racial society. By that I mean a society which is tolerant to all groups, which gives a chance to everybody.

If you start a society on the basis of “I am the majority. This is Chinese country or this is Malay country,” then we are going to run into very serious difficulties.

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It is very easy in Singapore to say, “Why worry? 75% are Chinese. Why speak English, Malay and bother about Tamil? Just speak Hokkien and Mandarin and ignore the rest.” But this is why we should not do these things.

The way we solve our multi-racial situation here, our multi-racial problems, will influence what happens in the rest of the countries in Southeast Asia who are faced with similar multi-racial problems. And, if we make a success, and in 10, 15 years' time, throw up a generation of leaders, men trained with a modern scientific outlook, and not only of Chinese and Indians but also of Malays and others, then we would have pointed the way to the future. And others must inevitably pick up the lessons from us.

If we choose the other path and just do things on the basis of race, language, religion, on the basis of one race, one language, one religion, there will be a lot of trouble for the whole of Southeast Asia for a very long time to come.

And, that is why the young are so important. We are old. Our values, our attitudes are fixed but the minds of the young are flexible. They come out with innocent minds. We are now having a generation that does not remember the British. They do not know about British colonialism and colonial rule.

The little boys who are going to school now will soon forget that there were riots in 1964 – provided we never allow riots to happen again. And we can prevent riots ever happening again, on a communal basis. Our young will soon forget the riots. There will be no heavy scars; the debris of past unhappiness will

not suffocate them. And we must give them the values of tolerance, understanding, togetherness and a society which gives everybody a meaningful life. And, in that way, we will secure an enduring future for ourselves and will help our neighbours to seek similarly rational solutions.

Finally, may I congratulate your community in Queenstown for having organised this occasion and for becoming identified as a community.

When I first came here nearly 3½ years ago, you were unable to articulate yourself. It was amorphous, incoherent, unorganised, disorganised. Now, you can give scholarships and can decide who who deserves to get a hundred dollars for three years.

This is what I mean by a closely-knit society. You have to understand this is your society. And the one weakness of our present society is that there is too much of the attitude of "Each man for himself".

It is the attitude of "my responsibility ends with my wife, my children, my mother, my father, perhaps my relatives". That was all right in a mediaeval society or when the British were ruling and you just made what you could and

looked after yourself. But it has to change when you are running your own society. This is yours.

We have spent thousands of dollars to put up fountains. And when I hear of people stealing spare parts costing hundreds of dollars and selling them for \$2 to \$3, I say that society must be educated to understand that this is theirs.

In another five years, all this will stop – by tighter organisation.

The society must organise itself. And to do that, you must understand that this is yours. This microphone is yours. It says “Ministry of Culture” but it is paid for by you. And if people damage it, it means more taxes will be taken to buy a replacement.

Slowly, we must educate a generation able to stand up, able to identify its collective interests, able to defend it to the end. And when people know we are prepared to defend it, then we will live in peace.

My congratulations to all of you. I hope we will have many happy years ahead. I think we have. The next decade is secured.

But, if we don't use the next decade, then this generation will blame you and me for having lost them their chances.

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