TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC ON "STUDENTS, POLITICS AND JOBS" ON 12TH OCTOBER, 1966.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

I have chosen as the subject of my brief discussion this evening "Students, Politics and Jobs" for I think these are things which really matter to all of you.

When we are young -- as once upon a time not so very long ago I was -- the world appears simple and straightforward. And you want to do the things which are morally right by yourselves, by your fellow students, your fellow-countrymen. Everything is simple. Then you grow up and you get embroiled in the business of making a living; living in the society that you are part of or even thinking of the possibility of taking yourself away to some other society which may offer you a more attractive life. You are then concerned with jobs.

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And all this really is the business of politics. And as a politician, one who has to manage the affairs not only of himself, his family but those of his own fellow countrymen, I would like to have a short discourse on why I think we ought to do what we are doing.

When you are young, from about 15 to 16 until you are about 25 or perhaps even 30, it is an age of idealism when you believe nothing is beyond fulfilment. And you are motivated not by selfish, greedy desires of wanting to advance yourselves at the expense of your fellow human-beings, but by a desire to try and bring about a better world. And that is an asset to any community.

I became what I am in those crucial years of my life and so it has been with many of my colleagues. But looking back now with a more jaundiced eye and looking at what has happened around us, I see that it is, in many parts of the world, societies which are under grave stress which face student unrest. It is not in the settled societies, the established societies, but in the unestablished ones. You get this manifestation whenever there is a discrepancy between the political leadership and aspirations on the ground. What is happening in Indonesia? Students take to the streets. So students also took to the streets in Japan about five to seven years ago. The Zengkakuren, the Japanese Students Union, snake-

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dancing in the streets, broke up the Eisenhower visit to Tokyo some six, seven years ago.

There are always manifestation of unease in society which can be dealt with in several ways. One, by taking the unease out; two, by repression.

Not very long ago, you had the same student problems in Burma. Thirty thousand students in Rangoon University and another 20,000 to 30,000 in Mandalay University -- there was a great deal of trouble. Constitutional Government swept aside; Army moved in. Student unrest continued. Then the Army moved in on the students; the students went home; bruised, battered, bled. The Universities closed down for a few months. The Universities resumed; students resumed; parents pledged good behaviour. And so the society goes on. The manifestation has been muted.

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But, whether the basic problems of which the student unrest was the manifestation has been resolved, that is another matter.

So the gist of my point is this: that, in any part of the world, if you expect your population to be sufficiently lively, alert, acutely in sympathy with the hopes and aspirations of its population, then there must be a situation which has a

certain amount of verve in it. It cannot be dead. But never forget this: there has been no revolution which the students have inherited. The students have always been a manifestation of it.

But others more qualified -- perhaps because they are more sophisticated and more cynical, more mature -- always inherit the revolution. Never believe that the Red Guards in China are going to push out Chairman Mao and his company and take over. They are there for Chairman Mao or whoever else is in a position of power to use, for specified purposes.

The idealism of youth is a valuable weapon in the hands of any sophisticated, ruling elite. This is putting it at its cynical best.

But when students in large numbers -- by which I mean students in tertiary levels of institutions of education -- who have gone beyond just the reading and writing stage... who have gone on to the thinking stage to question fundamentals, not just to learn by rote to memorise certain theorems, bits of poetry or bits of purple prose, but to question why, whence, where to... and if you cannot offer them a satisfying life and you have a large broad stratem of educated human beings who are dispossessed, then you will have the real revolution.

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So long as you can offer them jobs, fulfilment at the end of their academic careers as the Japanese offered their Zengakuren enthusiasts ... you can be a Zengakuren enthusiast: you can run around, snake-dance in the streets, go to the Tokyo park to demonstrate your contempt for constituted authority by doing your ablutions in public in the park -- which I am told they did with great effectiveness so much so that the park was unusable for several days thereafter -- that is just an exuberance of youthful spirit.

But when they come out having become qualified technicians, engineers, doctors, dentists, intellectuals and you cannot offer them a meaningful life, then somebody, some group of people will take over and say, "Follow me; we change the constituted order. We will provide you with a meaningful life."

And you know, the Communists are by far the more cynical of all the groups in this matter. They talk much about the masses and the wrath and anger of the people. But they, better than anybody else, understand that revolutions are forged by the hard thrust of a revolutionary spearhead. And nothing is a better revolutionary spearhead than dispossessed able intellectuals.

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So you see, the final test really is in the jobs. Can we here in this situation -- a highly urbanised, a highly commercialised, partly industrialised situation --

offer our educated elite jobs? ... And if you will look at the Thong Saw Park Report on the Ngee Ann College, you will see that it has commented on the fact that we have about one as many per thousand of population in university education as Britain which is one of the most highly developed societies of the world. There are not very many countries in Asia with this level of university education. We have 2,700 odd students in the University of Singapore; 2,100 in the Nanyang University, 2,600 in the Polytechnic. Well, let us say, you knock off 30 to 35 on an average for being non-Singapore citizens, and therefore not eligible for jobs as of right ...

I would like to make the point "as of right", you know. But let me tell them that this island is Wimbledon in Southeast Asia. Anybody with skills is welcome, and if he has more skills than our own, then he takes the place of the chap who is born here. And so it must be. It will always have to be, because it is on the basis of that verve and vitality and quality that this place has managed to secure its pre-eminence amongst civilised communities in this part of the world.

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But coming back, the point is this: you have, in looking after a community, to decide how much you educate them.

Different regimes have different attitudes. There are some regimes who believe the minimum is the best. That is so because then you can maintain the status quo. Then the number of people who break through, who begin to think and to question you can placate. Anybody who managed to get a university degree in the days of the British Raj in India -- an English university degree, not an Indian university degree, that is a different one -- then he is accommodated. He finds some place; he is not dispossessed. And so the situation is quiescent.

But now, when the Indian Government embarks on an ambitious education programme which leaves their teaching ratio of teachers to student population... about one university teacher for about 300 students -- and when there are 11 million university students, then you know what they are in for. In other words, every year, you will have so many million B.As, B.Scs and all the rest of it. Can you give them the jobs? And, if you cannot what happens?

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You read now, from time to time, the troubles they have in India: student violence. The police say they have investigated in Calcutta and, actually, only 30% of the participators of violence were students and 70% were non-students and so on. So the argument and the debate will go on.

That manifestation can be suppressed, as was recently demonstrated with efficacy in Indonesia. When the General says, "Stop rioting and demonstrations!" and the students say, "That to you; I am going out on the streets" -- the Palace Guards move in, a few students were killed and then you have peace and quiet.

So, it has been from the beginning of time: idealism always stops short of bloodshed. And when you have guns and organised force on the other side, then you stay back in your campus and just stew away.

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You and I therefore face a crucial problem. We have decided -- and I think we have decided rightly -- that the maximum number of educated people is the way forward for us.

We cannot govern on the basis of keeping our people backward. It is impossible. Tomorrow, if this place loses its momentum, if the organisation sags, if the organisational thrust, the vitality, the verve goes down, and there is a world depression, there is no such thing as you and I going back to plant tapioca or maize for a living. It is not on.

Those of you who have blue identity cards, perhaps you can go back -- as it was done during the Japanese Occupation. Some of you were probably born in that era or shortly afterwards. But in Japanese-occupied Singapore, large numbers of people migrated and went back to the land. And the Japanese opened settlements like Bahau in Seremban. Quite a number of people -- eminent lawyers and doctors and so on -- went back to plant maize and tapioca and eke a living while Singapore just stagnated. And you did not then see the ships in the harbour which I saw as I came in just now. Going along the waterfront just now, the harbour was a blaze of lights, literally a blaze of lights. And I remember sitting down at that waterfront -- where the Esplanade is -- seeing an empty harbour in the evenings. A war was on; a blockade was on; nothing moved.

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And remember this: if that happens to us again -- not because of a war, but because of our stupidity -- you might have to dig up your campus here and grow some tapioca or climb up to the roof ... I have seen some people grow grass on London roof-tops. And perhaps, you could try to grow tapioca on Housing and Development Board roof-tops. But I do not commend that as a good way of life.

And the final test really, is this: you want to maximise the output of your population. There is, in any given population, that much talent, that much non-talent, that much disability to carry. You have your people with a given state of cultural and emotional thrust and verve. You can mute it, like you can mute piano keys and make them lower or soft, or you can let them reverberate. And we have decided -- I hope rightly -- that we should let the thing reverberate. Every man his best, maximum. Everybody to schools. There is no child today that cannot find a place in school. There is no child who can pass his primary school and is fit to go to secondary school who cannot find one, and there is nobody who deserves to go further and cannot find a place in university, either here on or on scholarships abroad. That is Singapore.

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In other words, there is no more Government on the basis of ignorance. That is not possible. You must govern on the basis of consent, of intelligent consent. We consciously created that situation.

Now, let me be the first to admit that when it is necessary, we have used very stern methods. When a Communist-organised student group took over Nanyang University, literally ran the university, ran the professors, the teaching staff, then, perforce, we had to move in and we smacked them down. But if you smacked it down beyond what is necessary, then you have a quiescent, and a dead population, one without the vitality and the verve. Hence, you stop short of just enough to prevent real unruliness; and, short of that, we give full play to youthful boisterousness, exuberance, vigour, vitality and idealism.

When the university of Singapore students said they were going to march from their campus to the Trade Union Hall to meet me in a forum, I cheered for that. I was a student and I know just how difficult it will be for the organisers to get people to march five miles! But I will tell you this: that if we had allowed the Communists students to run rampant in Nanyang University without Suitability Certificates and so on to chop off the constant flow of organised groups into it, they could have marched from Nanyang 14 miles away, down to the Trade Union Hall, right around the town, caused a riot and then gone home.

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Ultimately, the problem lies in jobs and this is the case even with Nanyang students. They go home to Malaya -- 60% used to come from Malaya. Some drift back to Singapore, prepared to stay on in an underprivileged position, taking secondary jobs as non-citizens; jobs in private schools as teachers and so on because it is better than what is available for them elsewhere.

And, a curious mutation takes place. They no longer laugh with the same boisterousness and exhilaration because they are presented and confronted with the facts of life.

There is something curious about an Old Boys Association as distinct from an Old Graduates Association. The Old Boys Associations of secondary schools and primary schools manage to keep up a great deal of revolutionary fervour. With the Old Graduates Associations, particularly of thinking intellectuals, when they are presented with a challenge, they begin to sit down and think because that is what they have been trained to do.

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That is why I believe what we did was right. Maximum number ... educate them. Then present them -- as we presented the Nanyang graduates -- with an alternative.

If we say, “No, this society is barred to you. You are Chinese-educated; you don’t belong,” then I say, the revolution would have gone on. Not that they would have inherited the revolution, but the Communist leaders who manipulated them would have, in the end. But we presented them with a challenge and said, “Right, join us. Build this society. Make your contribution. You are entitled to enter all the government services, statutory boards, schools, etc. at this point and you compete” -- which they have, some very successfully. Some have taken on scholarships to American, Canadian and British universities, acquired post-graduate degrees: They are men of considerable talent and intellectual discipline. And they are now exercising their minds on what we should do.

And, this is the real challenge of our society: can we, one of the curious by-products of the colonial era -- the island fortress: Malta, Cyprus, Singapore ... They did not exist as identifiable entities in their own before this era. It was because some empire came, developed them, decided that these were strategic points. And a society grew up on its own in these places.

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Some, like Malta, ceased to be of strategic interest because the political milieu in which Malta is placed in the Mediterannean has changed. Weapons have changed; the strategic importance is no longer there and so, out of a

population of 370,000 Maltese, about 10% -- 20,000 to 30,000 migrate -- every year. Some go to Canada; find it too cold and go on to Australia. That is what a Maltese M.P. who came here -- a woman Minister for Education -- told me when she was going back to Malta from Australia where there are a large number of Maltese whom I myself personally saw.

There are islands like Cyprus which not completely unimportant; important enough for the British to say, "Right, then in this corner I will keep my bases and this will be mine, as of sovereign right." And there are troubles between the Cypriots who are Greeks and the Cypriots who are Turkish.

There is also Gibraltar which is going to go to the World Court to decide whether it belongs to Britain or to Spain and whether the 20,000 or 30,000 inhabitants belong to Britain or to Spain.

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But most important to you and me, there is Singapore with two million people on it, right in the heart of Southeast Asia, unlikely to be strategically unimportant for the rest of this century -- which is a very long time in your life-time and mine. And there are not many people -- besides you and I -- who want to see it prosper. There are a few. We have friends throughout the world who think about it, who have interests in the survival of an independent Singapore

which is non-Communist and democratic even though they may not like the socialist part of it! But they say, "Never mind, it is democratic; it is non-Communist."

And the challenge to us is whether we can create enough jobs. If we cannot, there are two things which will happen: either the Communists take over or some superior force must suppress it all. And it will be a very painful and a very expensive experience for anybody who wants to suppress us and for us, ourselves. And it is your job and mine to make it quite clear and manifest to everybody that any attempt at suppression will be a thankless, endless task so that they will make it worth their while to make sure that a situation exists in which we can create the kind of society that gives jobs, meaningful jobs to everybody.

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That is why our policy is such that we want the maximum verve and vitality in our population, short of it falling into the hands of an organised group like the Communists. We want the maximum amount of trained intellectual discipline to bring their minds to bear on this problem: how, on 224 sq. miles of the most valuable piece of real estate in the whole of Southeast Asia, we can provide meaningful lives for its present inhabitants or, at least, its present

citizens -- which is different from inhabitants, you know .... and can continue to give meaningful lives to all its citizens for the forseeable future.

I would say that we stand our best chance in having informed, enlightened thinking people from all our language streams. Whether you are Chinese-educated primarily or English-educated or Indian-educated or Malay-educated, the problem is the same: how to make Singapore work. And it has got opportunities! Enormous opportunities!

We have a central point in this region; there is enormous potential in shipping, dockyards and a life out of the sea. Half of the population of Norway lives on the sea or by the sea. This is one of the curious things I discovered during my recent visit to Scandinavia. Whole villages form co-operatives, acquire ships, go fishing or run fishing-lines which travel round the world. And they live off the sea.

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And here we are with two dockyards -- one in Jurong which we do in partnership with the Japanese and one at Tanjong Pagar which we do on our own and which is under capacity because of some stupidity which has not ensured a swift flow of trained men -- our men -- into these jobs. We started it in 1961 and it will be another 10, 15 years before we man the establishment. And ships

are bypassing Singapore for repairs, bunkering in Hong Kong where they do it. There are no problems of overtime -- it is right round the clock, and there are no demurrage charges! It gives enormous employment. The docks are on your doorstep. The ships can unload; go into dry dock, be cleaned, scraped, repaired, given new paint, refitted, and then leave.

We sent a team recently to study this in Malta. A naval base there is being shut down. A team of British dockyard engineers is in collaboration with the Maltese government to take it over. But they cannot use the facilities which the Royal Navy have left behind yet to capacity.

And this is where the Polytechnic comes in because it can produce trained men. But here is one of our problems! We have a population willing, keen to work and learn but with prejudices.

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We have only about half a dozen vocational schools. But, two of them are empty. Parents are prejudiced against the blue collar. Everybody thinks his son is going to be a literary genius! You say, “Learn how to turn a lathe” -- and they say, “Oh, how dare you suggest that of my son!” And, out of just half a dozen vocational secondary schools, two are already completely empty.

Our problem really, is not to explain to the older generation why they should educate their children, but how and in what direction they must be educated. We must atune them psychologically and emotionally to accept the changes which must take place to provide a meaningful life for the present citizens of Singapore. Otherwise, we cannot all be clerks and lawyers and administrators. The place must work and it will only work on the basis of technological and industrial advance.

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And that is why so much of the effort and attention of the government since 1959 -- including the personal care and loving attention of the Deputy Prime Minister -- has been on things like the Polytechnic -- mundane, unglamorous things like how to get things done.

And I would like to end on this note -- that nothing is pre-destined. Nobody has written down in any book that this is to happen in this way, either for you or for the rest of the world. And nobody has said that we, some 2 million people in the island of Singapore, surrounded by the kind of neighbours that we have and the kind of friends that we have -- and friends are as important, if not important than some of the neighbours -- will survive and prosper and flourish or will succumb, degenerate, sag and get lost in a morass. Nobody has pre-ordained what it should be.

Nobody wrote in a book who should win the last war. I used to believe then that the Allies were bound to win because I had always thought that they were bound to win. Having read the memoirs of many generals on both sides, I often wonder now how it was that I was foolish enough then to believe that one side was sure to win. Because often, it could have easily gone the other way.

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And so it is with us. If we get a good grasp of what are our assets; what it means to others that we should survive and be non-Communist, democratic and a sparking-point for greater effort around us -- economic, constructive endeavour -- then we shall make a valuable contribution to the history of this region.

But if we lose sight of the dangers and the hazards which are confronting us every day and believe that the world owes us a living -- in fact, it does not -- then, alas, you and I will be spared the misery of reading of our failures. We won't be alive to face the humiliation of it all, but some of our next generation will and they will never forgive us.

I would like to end on this optimistic note: what I have experienced of the response from the population.... You know, if you take a whip and you crack it and the horse flags and stumbles and it falters, then the driver must lose heart. But, over the years, my colleagues and I have had a tremendous exhilaration out of the response that has come from the people. You present them with a challenge and a problem and they respond with great verve and vitality.

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Confrontation -- 1963, 1964: there was one year almost of stagnation. All the figures show that they cannot lie about the number of ships that came, and there was a drop in cargo loaded and unloaded. We expected our national

income to go down by 8.7%. But even then, resourceful people sought new outlets, finally made up that 8.7% and added another 2% increase. And by 1965 -- the next year -- it went forward by 7 to 8%. And in one year of independence -- from August 1965 to August 1966 -- it went up by about 9%.

The response is there. It is a people that respond to a challenge. And that is the reason why every time you try to understand what you are doing, remember this: what we want to do is to get the maximum of the population. We have very little in mineral resources. You read what the Foreign Minister of Indonesia said. He has diamond mines, oil fields, minerals, vegetables, animal resources -- the whole lot. But I will tell you what we have -- the human resource -- the ability to galvanise and gird collectively to effective purpose.

And I would like to believe that this Polytechnic will make a contribution towards that end.

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