

EXTRACT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH AT THE RALLY
AT FULLERTON SQUARE - 29TH AUGUST, 1972

Friends and fellow citizens -- I make this distinction because it is an important one. Some friends are more loyal to Singapore than some fellow citizens. There are some citizens whose hearts, for various reasons, are in the wrong place. Some are openly unfriendly, and we welcome the contest.

It is a pity that not all the 65 seats are being contested. Because we want those who are financing quite a number of this bunch of 75 candidates to know where the people of Singapore stand. A majority of the 75 are political riff-raff, ragamuffins who will do anything to try their luck for money is what they need. One has even been charged and convicted for CBT (Criminal Breach of Trust).

National Archives of Singapore

It is 9 years since there was a full contest for the hearts and minds of Singaporeans. Or is there such a thing as a "Singaporean"? Or are we just Chinese -- English-educated Chinese, Chinese-educated Chinese -- Malays, Indians, Ceylonese, Eurasians and others?

In 1968, there was no contest, only 7 political jokers. Somebody must have paid Mr. Vetrivelu's \$500, for he cannot even pay his PUB bills. Sometime I am amazed at his candid if naive way he tells us of his difficulties.

Why are we interested? Why are the people financing some of these candidates? Well, they can buy electoral registers very easily, and particularly with computers, you can break down the constituencies into racial, religious and almost linguistic components. All the opposition candidates should have done so. So have we. And several governments, some friendly and some not so friendly, will also be interested to know. We also want to know on 2nd September, or the morning of the 3rd, how many people are against the government in each constituency and for what reasons, ethnic, religious, economic or personal grievances.

A lot of people are interested to see whether the Malays will vote for Malays, how the Indians will go. How the Chinese voted -- the difference between the English educated and Chinese educated, and so on. From the results, we will know, first, whether, if some people wanted to make use of some of our citizens, they can succeed. Second, the big powers, the super powers -- Americans, Russians and Chinese -- will be interested to see whether, in the long

run, we are going to be Singaporeans, or are we just Chinese, Indians, Malays and others.

I get a lot of advice from diplomats and Western experts. Sometimes, I pick up valuable points. A lot of what they recommended is just irrelevant to you and me, and may be harmful.

In new countries, elections often become a farce, in which promises which cannot be fulfilled, are made. Ministers become corrupt because they are not sure whether they can win the next elections. It is not possible to be corrupt without somebody knowing. Another person is involved. That other person is probably getting the money from some other source. So it will go down the line from Ministers to Secretaries to clerks to messengers. It has happened in many countries. Once a country has gone down that slippery slope, it ends at the bottom as a broken-back state. It is very hard to recover. If you have Mr. Vetrivelu, Mr. Jeyaretnam and Mr. Murugason in charge, we will be a broken-back state in no time.

We are not a broken-back state. I know a lot of foolish candidates going around saying that the government is corrupt. I do not bother to issue summonses during the elections. But they are fools. We are not. If you can believe what they say, I am happy and prepared to step down.

All of us know about separation in 1965. We do not want to rake up this race riots, all that preceded and followed them.

In 1967 seven persons formed a right-wing political party, called the National Party of Singapore. They used dummies as committee members. When I say “they”, you and I know who “they” are. The founder members were J.B. Jeyaretnam, R. Murugason, and Dr. Phoon Wai Onn, who has been in the news often. Dr. Phoon has wisely decided that he will not come out this time.

Let me read the platform of the National Party: Registered in 1967.

“Work for the eventual re-unification of Singapore with Malaysia on the basis of equal partnership

This was early in 1967. Then came 1968, when the British announced their decision to pull out by 1971. We called for elections immediately. We were faced with a grave crisis. Where were Mr. Jeyaretnam, Mr. Murugason and Dr. Phoon? They were all above 21, mature men. Singapore faced a crisis. Why did they not come out and to tell you what was the way out? They ducked, because everybody, including their backers thought that we would go down the drain. Then we would have to crawl back.

Towards the end of 1970, there was speculation of snap elections. They tried to revive political activity. One newspaper was set up, the Singapore Herald. And an established right-wing paper, the Nanyang Siang Pau, run by Kuomintang types, suddenly became pro-communist, Chinese chauvinist, attacking the government for killing the Chinese language and culture, and inciting people to violence and revolution.

National Archives of Singapore

On the 2nd February, 1971, the National Party of Singapore was revived again with Mr. Jeyaretnam, Murugason, Phoon Wai Onn and Lui Boon Poh. They were supposed to be working together. But they quarrelled. Each of them wanted to be the Secretary- General. Lui Boon Poh thought he should be, because he was and could speak Chinese. Jeyaretnam could not speak Chinese. How can he be Secretary-General?

I cannot tell you everything, because we want to be friendly with as many groups and governments as is possible. Let me read you a letter from Donald Stephens, the man who lost money, \$1½million, supposedly his money, in the Herald. He wrote to me from Canberra after the trouble started, not before he “started” the paper. He wrote in May last year:

“I feel I should tell you that my only motive in putting money into the ‘Herald’ was because I have been in the newspaper business before and because I believe Singapore to be a country where my investments would be safe.”

What a great tribute from a Malaysian Ambassador, or High Commissioner, in Canberra. He is putting his money in Singapore where it will be safe, and not in Kuala Lumpur. And he said:

“I am not getting younger and I thought that if I were to retire before very long I would be able to get a living out of my investments in the ‘Herald’, and as I have said above, the newspaper business is one business I really know something about.”

In other words, this \$1.5 million was his pension. He went on to say:

“The policy was that the Singapore Herald should be genuinely Singapore oriented, a Singapore newspaper. I also made a point about the paper being pro-government, your government.”

How marvellous. Somebody put his life savings to be pro the Singapore government, and propagandise for me. What more can I ask for !

Well, he lost his pension, and the Chase Manhattan Bank lost a million dollars. I do not know how Donald Stephens accumulated money to lose \$1.5 million without batting an eyelid. When he was running the Sabah Times, it was not worth \$100,000, never mind \$1.5 million.

Politics in new countries is literally a matter of your life and mine. This is especially so in Singapore. You heard Dr. Goh on Sunday. We have no gold, no oil, no natural wealth. All we have is Singapore, and many intelligent people, with skilful fingers. It is a hardworking population and well-organised, at ten thousand per square mile. Packed so closely people can get very irritable. If you walk in Central Park, New York, it is a real risk to life and limb. I had a whole flying squad of special agents with me. I thought it was a joke. They took their

walkie-talkies and talked to each other. Later, I learned it was not a joke. If you were not careful you will be mugged and robbed. If these muggers find you have no money, they kill you, because you have frustrated them. We must not allow it to happen here.

You just read the utter, lunatic things the opposition candidates say. If ever these people came into power, even God cannot help you from disaster. They are going to give you flats for free, medicine for free, everything you can ask or think of. The British tried that and they went near bankrupt. Now they charge about \$5 for one visit to a doctor. And the British pay their National Insurance weekly for all their social benefits and pensions. But our opposition will give all of this for free. There is no need to pay. In fact, there is no need to work. We can all go home and sit under the banana tree.

You have read of the Che Guevarist revolution in Ceylon. A left-wing coalition government of Sri Lanka Freedom, Trotskyities, and the Communist Party of Ceylon and one or two left-wing groups. Ceylon could not go further left than that. Sri Lanka are great friends with China. What Mr. Chou En-lai told Mrs. Bandaranaike made me feel deeply for her troubles. They had promised to double the rice ration. There was no foreign money in the Treasury. They had to pay for the rice. So, "please can you give me some rice?" Chou said, "Nothing

is for free. There is a limit to our help.” I have never gone anywhere in my travels asking anything for free. It is shameful. I told Mr. Harold Wilson this in 1968. He said, “Never mind, we will give you some aid.” I said, “Harold, you are under no obligation to do so. If you want to give, I shall be happy to accept. But if I lead my people to believe that their survival depends on aid, they will die.” So, he gave us £50 million one-quarter outright grant and three-quarters loan with interest. But loan to be repaid. We thanked them. But our present strength did not depend on that 50 million pounds.

Our GDP since 1968 has more than doubled. It went up at an average of 15 per cent a year, by your work and our planning. In the seven years of separate independence, we have found a new way to make a living.

Only 7 years have passed.

National Archives of Singapore

But Dr. Goh, MR. Rajaratnam and my colleagues and I have become more than 7 years older. It is much easier to be a lawyer, or a banker. Mr. Rajaratnam’s father left him a fortune. He does not have to sit in this sun and be friendly to you. He can go to Canada. He has got money. He has got training, intellectual skills, a capacity for analysis and articulation. Mr. Trudeau would be happy to have him. If you have money, you can go to British Columbia. But

only one per cent of us can do this. The other 99 per cent have to stay here, because you have got no money, no special training and no special skills which the advanced countries need. Dr. Goh can also leave. He is an economist of considerable ability. The Magsaysay award citation made me feel a little abashed. The praise was overwhelming. He is almost the world's greatest economist. But he is prepared to stay in Singapore to slog it out for another 10-15 years.

Dr. Goh is not only a great economist. He is a great colleague, a stout-hearted man in a crisis. He made our \$350 million overseas reserves into \$4,200 million in 13 years. And he is a very thrifty man. When asked what he would do with the US\$10,000 Magsaysay award, he prudently said he would put it into government bonds, tax-free at 5¾ per cent. If he were a different chap, he would have said, "I would buy Slater-Walker, or whichever company that is going to be taken over." Slater himself started with £2,000. Now he has got £100 million. He is expanding in Hong Kong, Singapore and Europe. He aims to reach £1,000 million of his personal wealth.

Why should Dr. Goh spend money buying expensive military hardware, training soldiers, sailors and airmen, when he is a thrifty soul. He was Defence Minister in 1965-67 and again from 1970 till now. He is a tough-minded, resolute and able administrator. He built up a defence force from almost nothing. At that time half of our two SIR battalions were Malaysians. Most of the officers were Malaysians.

Weapons do not produce interest. Unlike the factory machinery that produce either radios or cars or transistors, weapons not only do not produce goods for sale, they go obsolete every five or 10 years, when new generation of weapons take their place. Being a thrifty man, Dr. Goh buys proven weapons. We bought second-hand AMX 13 tanks. It is a proven tank, good for this part of the world and proven under battle conditions.

Now, for soldier -- 2 years for National Servicemen and 2½ years for an officer -- every day he has to be fed, clothed and housed. Large track of land at Pasir Labar and Pulau Tekong and Pulau Senang are being fired and bombed at with live ammo almost every day. At the National Day Parade, with every time boom of the 18 Presidential Ceremonial Salute, Dr. Goh whispered to me, "There goes \$400." I softly said, "Never mind. Just once a year. We can afford it."

Defence costs us millions. I put down Defence Expenditure at about 2 per cent of GDP in 1996 to about 10 per cent in 1972. No country discloses its detailed defence expenditure. We train men with live bullets and mortar shells. If we use sham bullets, the soldiers will be afraid when in actual combat. When you know the other chap is firing real bullets, and if he carelessly points at a wrong direction, you may be a dead duck. All this is in deadly earnest. We are a small country. We are a small people of 2.1 million. But just calculate this as any military attache in Singapore can. Every year, some 16,000 to 20,000 were to go into the army. We are slowing this down because the ANZUK force is here. I do not know for how long. The British may not be able to afford six frigates patrolling in the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean if their workers go on strike with such unfailing regularity. They are going to leave one day. I hope it may be a few more years. It buys us time because the faster they go, the more risks we have to take in training and the more expensive it is. At the end of 1980, if it became necessary at the press of a button, we will have 250,000 in the Armed Forces. To attack one battalion in a prepared defence position, 3 battalions are usually needed. Even then, you cannot be sure of capturing it. When we have got 250,000, whoever wants to take us over must have 750,000. That is quite a big size army. We can afford this only because of a national service army. What it is that your opposition tell you? Abolish it. Can Singapore maintain a 100,000 standing army? We shall go bankrupt. Having

been trained 2 years, keep them trim, keep in combat trim, how to roll, how to duck. This is an investment, not one that produces direct money interest, but one that produces an indirect interest in your security, and by giving confidence, not only to overseas investors, but also to our people with money.

This election is a test for our future. Foreign governments are interested, Americans, Russians, the Chinese are interested to know what Singapore is becoming. Naturally, the Malaysians and Indonesians, being close neighbours, they would like to know what the breakdown is between loyal Singaporeans and those who are not. This is a real test for you as much as for the Singapore government, a test the governments in the region, and the super-powers have a long term interest in because we happen to be in a strategic position.

If you are easily taken in, then all any government need do is to pump in US\$100 million or more over 10 years and they can take it over. This time they were foolish. The Herald was openly anti-Singapore, anti-national service, long hair, drugs and everything with-itism.

Next time, more mature operators do not have to buy the Straits Times. You just buy a few people, starting off with a convivial dinner, with wines and good cuisine. Ly Singko was paid \$2,000 in Sin Chew Jit Poh. Then he got \$7,000 in Nanyang. He knew it was danger money. He refused to write the last few editorials. If you are a mercenary, whether in the Congo or in Biafra, you have got to go on. He was forced to go on. The mercenary people can buy over. Now we are giving him time to reflect over the unwisdom of it all. But we want his masters to understand -- the paymaster -- that this plot cannot work. They will try again. Buy a few in the Straits Times, New Nation, or the Sin Chew Jit Poh, a few to start off. Their proxies need publicity and encouragement to keep morale up. By plugging a line over 10 years, especially when the PAP old guards will not be in charge, they may succeed. I am hoping the new guards will be able to match these operators move for move. We are trying to teach them. But you can never tell. I read reports of all the bright students go into engineering, the sciences, medicine, economics, and so on. The not so bright go to political science and sociology. When they cannot get a good job, they go on to journalism. We are supposed to have freedom of the press. Their analysis of the PAP is often completely off mark. They do not know the basic data about men and politics in Singapore, that in politics here literally mean life and death. In new countries the price to have a say in the destiny of your people is the willingness to die for your convictions. I met the "Plen" a communist leader

before I took office and after 1959 when in office. He knew what it was. His life was at stake. He wanted a communist Malaya (West Malaysia including Singapore). He was prepared to give his life up for it. I disagreed profoundly with what he wanted to do. I had a reluctant respect for him. He had personal courage and dedication to a cause.

We were in trouble in 1964 communal riots. Everybody in the coffee shops knew what happened. The commission of inquiry was never held. Where was Mr. Vetrivelu? He was in the Singapore Indian Congress. He is on the side of the chap with the gun. Where was Mr. Jeyaretnam? Or for that matter, Mr. Ong Eng Guan or Mr. David Marshall? They knew who held the gun and was prepared to use it regardless of the niceties of the law.

P.A.P. Ministers in Singapore were not sure whether the policemen outside were guarding us or were there to do us in when ordered. You remember what the Barisan Sosialis and their opportunist supporters said before we took you into Malaysia, that we are selling Singapore and the non-Malays into bondage and subjugation by the Malays. After the riots, I told my colleagues that even if we died, that was the least we could do. But never give in. We demanded that Malaysia stood by the agreed documents of the Constitution. We stuck our necks out.

Vote on Saturday in a way that all the super-powers may know that whether you are Chinese-educated, English-educated, or bi-lingual, whether Indians, Eurasians, or Malays you are voting as Singaporeans. We allow a certain latitude. We do not want to repress people. But leave nobody in my doubt that you know the game about. Vote in such a way that nobody believes that money can buy out Singapore. Once they can get a few mercenaries in, then proxies, and one day, they may get a majority and in three readings in Parliament in one day of an emergency sitting, all that we have built up is gone. Then our commander-in-chief will have to salute whoever is sent down to take over because that is the present constitutional rule of the game. We will work out a constitution that will prevent any change constitutionally in three readings.

You know that a house worth \$15,000 in Johore Bahru can be worth over \$75,000 in Singapore. I do not have to tell you why. Just keep the value of your house and, more important, your style of life in Singapore and the future of your children. Show them not only is the government sophisticated, but you the people are also aware of these games they play. We are all chess players. We do not play dumbs, i.e. checkers. Let others play checkers, we play chess. You vote for yourselves and your future because your lives are involved.
