ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AT SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, SUNDAY 3 MARCH, 1974

Technological breakthroughs often bring about unexpected results. These consequences were not intended by the scientists who made the discoveries, nor contemplated by those who financed the research. Modern medicine, both in public health and in personal care, has made tremendous progress in the three decades since the last War. But it has created new enormous problems in the process. In poor countries, populations have swelled. In rich countries, geriatrics has created more pressures to care for large numbers of older people who lead lonely lives, without enough social participation that make life rewarding. Medical science has helped many with hereditary defects to live. It has increased the numbers who now transmit these defects to the next generation, and so increased the numbers needing special care and treatment.

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Compassion within nations has led to more and more social and health services being paid for by the better able and the more productive, to try and achieve some equality for the less able and the less productive. The wealthier a

society becomes, the more they can afford to, and usually do, spend on such welfare.

As the world gets wealthier, so compassion has led to international social and health projects. The strong and wealthy nations have tried to redress the balance by helping the weak and the poor. WHO (World Health Organisation), based in Geneva, helps to improve standards of public health and medical care. FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), based in Rome, helps to alleviate the terrifying effects of drought and famine, disasters which periodically strike poor and undeveloped parts of the world, where agriculture is wholly dependent on rainfall, and there is no fall-back on dams and irrigation. UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) has met regularly to get, two decades, the '60s and the '70s, dedicated to development. The results, so far have not been up to expectations. The developed countries have been asked to pledge to give 1% of their GNP in aid for development for the under-developed.

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But this target has not been achieved, and few countries have even attempted to achieve this 1%.

The spread of modern science and technology to the less developed countries has not been an unmixed blessing. In most countries, population growth has been faster than the rate of economic development. Now, with the oil

crisis, the United States has cut down on her aid. Neither Western Europe nor Japan is expected to increase her aid. The oil-producing countries are now going to have huge surpluses. But why should they give more aid than 1% of their GNP, which is a level developed countries have not reached? As a consequence, countries which have come to depend upon this aid, estimated at some US$10 billion a year, are now faced with large needs which will not be met.

If the international community, through UN agencies like WHO, FAO and the World Bank, had not, in the first place, injected medicine and food into large areas of the under-developed world, the peoples in these areas might have taken some other path for their own advancement. If only education and expertise had been transmitted, and machinery and equipment given or loaned, but not food, they might not have become so heavily populated. Indeed, they might have become self-reliant and found a social and economic equilibrium which was not dependent on annual aid of food grains. But then, once upon a time, America, Canada and Australia had huge food surpluses. And it seemed only humane to help feed the hungry peoples. Now it is doubtful if the consequences of these humanitarian policies have added to the sum total of human happiness. These are baffling problems. And they have accumulated and grown in magnitude over the last two decades.

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Nature has always favoured the survival of the ones most capable of adapting to changing circumstances. Biologically, it has led to the dominance of man over all other living creatures. From time immemorial, the more aggressive groups have moved into the more fertile valleys. Agriculture was the first technological breakthrough that enabled civilisation to flourish. So the less aggressive were pushed into the less fertile areas. Now, in a curious way, through the discoveries and needs of the advanced technological societies, some of those dispossessed have come into great fortunes.

Technological breakthroughs by advanced peoples have conferred benefits in unexpected ways to peoples living in poorer parts of the world. For instance, once upon a time, the kingdom of Brunei included the whole of Sarawak and the whole of North Borneo. But the White Rajahs, the Brookes, pushed the Brunei Malays northwards out of Sarawak. Alas, from the north, the British North Borneo Company pushed the Brunei Malays southwards. So they were squeezed into the most infertile part of the west coast of Borneo. Many decades later, it was discovered that the reason for the poor agriculture was that there was oil in the earth. And so the wronged and the long suffering are now flourishing.

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Similarly, the aggressive tribes had occupied all the fertile river valleys and highlands in East and Central Africa. They had pushed other tribes into the

barren scrub-land, once known as Northern Rhodesia. But, meanwhile, the industrial nations had developed a demand for copper. They also developed the means to prospect and mine this copper. Northern Rhodesia was scrub-land and infertile but it was also in the copper belt. Today, Zambia has one of the highest per capita incomes in Central Africa.

So it has been with the Arab world. The Arabs who straddled the Euphrates, the Nile, and the Mediterranean Coast with rainfall, they thought they were the fortunate ones. The Arab peoples of the deserts, particularly those in the Arabian peninsula were thought to be the less fortunate. Meanwhile, the industrial world had developed a growing demand for oil. It had also developed the technological capacity to drill for it both on land and offshore. Oil exploration has now established that two-thirds of the world's proven oil deposits are in this arid and agriculturally unproductive area of the Gulf. So all this while, there was great wealth under the desert sands for those who were thought to be the less fortunate of the Arab peoples.

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Some of these Gulf States were, until recently, protected by Western powers like Britain. Western concepts of national sovereignty developed in 400 years of dealings between the nation states of Western Europe have now become applicable in dealings between the technologically advanced nations and the new

countries which inherited these colonial boundaries. So the advantage has now shifted to a fortunate few with oil.

A question being asked is whether these wealthy oil states will show a compassion for the plight of the less developed world. Will they show much more consideration to the poor countries than the advanced countries once showed to them? Some hopes were raised, but did not materialise, at the recent meeting in Lahore. But, compassion and sentiment aside, something must be done about the huge sums of money which the advanced countries will issue to pay for the oil, or the world economic and monetary system will be wrecked by inflation and instability on a scale unknown before. It was, and is, the technologically strong who have laid down the rules of the game. Under these rules, they, the technologically strong, must pay vast sums for the oil they need to keep their economies going. They must pay either in kind or in money, but mostly in money. So what else besides gold will go up as people lose confidence in paper currency? The rules of the game cannot be changed as long as the two super-powers neatly balance each other. So the world security system, based on a balance of nuclear terror, allows all countries, including the oil producers, to make the most of their natural resources.

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The major oil consuming countries have met recently in Washington. One must hope there will be rational decisions arising out of these discussions amongst the big consumers, and that then the big oil consumers and the big oil producers can, through understanding of their common interests to keep the world economy growing, make such accommodations as will enable them to prevent economic instability and chaos. The eventual outcome of these recent developments on the restriction of oil production and the sharp increases in oil prices will be as intriguing as it will be momentous for the future of all nations, the developed, the developing and the less developed. The crux of the matter is: can the strong alone inherit the earth? Was there not a biblical reference to the meek coming into some inheritance?

But who can predict what lies ahead? Further technological discoveries in new energy sources and in other fields may open up new vistas for mankind. Inevitably, these innovations will bring in their train new problems for mankind.

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But, having opened Pandora's box, and all desires released, only hope remains. Man's irrepressible curiosity will lead him to new discoveries. Up till now, these discoveries have solved more problems than they have created. For never has mankind been so successful in taming the forces of the physical world. Never before has man become so numerous, so long-lived, so mobile, and so materially well off. The question now is whether optimism about the future is justified

when the world's population is expected to double to over 7 billion by the year 2000, in spite of the efforts of UN agencies and governments to spread birth control. Worse, many conservationists, scientists and economists fear that technologically advanced states are damaging the environment, and exhausting the the non-renewable resources of the earth, leaving future generations worse off in 100 years. But perhaps because these alarms have been sounded, the future is not without optimism for most of mankind.

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