ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE PARLIAMENTARY LUNCH AT CANBERRA, ON 20 OCTOBER, 1976

Mr Prime Minister,

Leader of the Opposition,

Acting Deputy Prime Minister,

May I thank all three of you most warmly for the welcome you have extended me, and the friendly and complimentary references you have made.

There are very few countries I go to where I know both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition so well, and how each has achieved and deserved high office. The Australians have a reputation in Southeast Asia for being an open, frank and uninhibited people. And, as befits the people, so the political leaders, and their style of political contest.

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There is that robust spirit of a vigorous people, often bubbling over to rumbustiousness. Behind all the political skirmishing and sniping, there used to be a great deal of common ground between the Government and the Opposition.

I am told that in recent months, some bitterness has crept into the political debate and that party partisanship has spread beyond the political parties into once traditionally neutral areas. But I am also told that the tough fabric of Australian politics can take these temporary aberrations and pressures without much harm.

Moreover, those who know Australia well tell me that there is really little that the politicians can do to prevent it from being a wealthy and happy country. It is only in poor developing countries like Singapore, with slender resources, that politics have to be taken seriously, and politicians carry a heavier responsibility for the miseries which are so often the common lot of their people. There are enormous resources in Australia which, as they are extracted, will lubricate any social or political friction. It is almost impossible to be angry and spiteful for long in a country where there are so many of the good things of life, and most of them nearly for free.

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In 1973, the future promised an increasingly wealthy and abundant Australia. With the commodity boom, the industrial nations scrambled to stock up essential minerals. Even in early 1974, after the oil crisis, no one could have foretold that unemployment would become an Australian malady although by then there were some nagging signs of inflation.

Now, it seems that the world's industrial countries are not going to rush in to grab Australia's natural resources. I have read that some have to be persuaded to invest heavily to get the minerals extracted. But these are ephemeral problems. Given a strong and vigorous people, intelligent enough to know that they need not work so hard since nature has endowed them with so much, Australians are bound to prosper in a world where population pressures on finite resources must increase in the long run.

And as political parties compete for votes, Australians are bound to get an ever greater spread of wealth. Eventually, even the pursuit of happiness may become the business of politicians who may promise this when all the material wealth and comfort have not brought happiness. Perhaps new drug therapies may help to redeem such pledges of politicians. Such is the promise of the biological and chemical sciences.

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I have had several references made to the problem of durability, and I feel that amongst friends I must share the secrets. First, one has got to start very young. It has a great advantage. Second, one has got to get over the temptation of the news media capturing one's soul. Third, never mind what the news media says, just keep the people well-fed, well educated, well housed, and promise

them that little bit more over the horizons, provided they work. But that is only for Singapore.

I do not know why it is or how it is, but my friend Gough always arouses that something in me. He enthuses me. He referred to Papua New Guinea. And I thought to myself, how kind of him to have thought of the new economic order, and to remind Australians, because if I were to do it, it would be so churlish of a guest, that this new economic order means that all the wealthy of the world please chip in and give to the poor of the world like me.

I feel a little embarrassed every time mention is made to me and leadership. I believe I often look around to see if there is somebody else that they were talking about. Perhaps he has the secret. But the simple way is to speak the truth, and describe it as you see it.

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Finally, to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and the Leader of the Opposition, and to Mr. Sinclair, and to all Parliamentarians present, who are competing and thereby contributing to the well-being of this continental island paradise of the South Pacific, may I express my thanks to you all for this warm welcome.
