

TRANSCRIPT OF A SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT A LUNCH-TIME ELECTION
RALLY, HELD AT FULLERTON SQUARE,
ON 20TH DECEMBER, 1976

Friends and fellow-citizens,

If you read, and you understand only the English Language, then you are at a very grave disadvantage because you really don't know what is going on in a large part of Singapore . If you believe that the Straits Times and the New Nation is what Singapore is about, then you are living in a dream world.

Before you even pretend to want to be a candidate, let alone a leader man, or as Mr. Jeyaretnam hopes to be leader of Her Majesty's Opposition, says he over Radio Singapore -- I say, please be at least in a position to comprehend what is taking place.

You know, Mr Marshall used to come here. He was a very clever man, good orator, I think much smarter than Mr. Jeyaretnam. He got nowhere, you know. He was saying one thing; his banners in Chinese were saying the exact opposite. And I don't know whether I shall hold Mr. Jeyaretnam responsible for what his supporters are saying in Chinese, and those are the basic issues, the gut issues. You know, the hoary question of killing Chinese education, that is what has been raised again. And they are issues which can stir up the people.

Well, the Chinese press -- we having smacked down very hard on Mr. Lee Eu Seng, and I make no pretence about it. You play Chinese chauvinism, I smack you because it can lead to bloodshed.

So Mr. Shamsuddin Tung Tao Chang comes out on behalf of Mr. Lee Eu Seng in one of the constituencies near Telok Blangah. Fine! Everybody has his say. But everybody -- I literally say 'everybody' because now it is very easy to record these things on the tape -- they transgress the known rules of the law, they will be asked to explain.

I tell you what are the issues. Jobs. Now better jobs, not just any job. The problems that accompany the change in our way of life as resettle

farmers. A time will come when we will have to ask ourselves: "Can we afford to rear pigs instead of buying them? Maybe ten years, maybe less. Because one pig gives out as much pollution as five human beings, and the pollution goes into the water. And one whole reservoir in Kranji is not used, because we are phasing out the farmers gradually -- not to dislocate them and their livelihoods -- from Chua Chu Kang to certain areas where we have given up trying to trap the water. I say, "Right, let the pollution go." So somebody writes and says: "Coney Island is dirty." Well, if one pig equals five human beings and you have got 500,000 pigs and the water all runs into the river, that goes out into Coney Island, we will have to build a swimming pool in Coney Island, isn't it? These are basic issues. This is a problem we have to face. We compensate them.

But for the old, it is a real problem. A man is 50 plus. All his life he has reared pigs. You want him to go to a factory? He can't. His whole way of life is upset. You compensate him. You give him a house, free. But he says, "What do I do for a living? Depend on my children?" And these days the children are different. Old people who are not completely mentally composed are left in Woodbridge and the children disappear. They don't turn up for their parents because it is a burden. These are real problems.

Two specific points I looked up because, you know, we try to take the opposition seriously. So when they raised serious points, we looked it up. They are niggardly points. On the big issues, they talked rubbish. Dissolve National Service. Have they taken leave of their senses? 1968, when the British said they were leaving, we got a fright, didn't we? Because we weren't ready. When they finally left, last year, there was not a ripple because, you know, I know and everybody knows -- Singapore is not for free. We built it the hard way. And it is not a joke. Maybe they are jokers. Maybe they are joking, I don't know. But we are not.

But they raised two serious points. Mr. Jeyaretnam says some group of farmers -- 12, I read -- went to see him and as a result of their seeing him, they got no compensation as farmers. I queried. Reply came: the matter was thoroughly investigated. Yes, he did.

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But, you know, the government departments are accustomed not to be intimidated either by opposition politicians who are lawyers; or by the government MPs who are lawyers; or by members of my family who are lawyers. Those are standing instructions. And this is a very compact society. If you start doing things, you bend the rules, it's known very rapidly and quickly, spreads like wildfire. Most governments lose elections in the capital city. You watch the

LDP. They lose Tokyo, in Japan. You see, the government in India never won Delhi because they get to know. And we have won in Singapore, repeatedly, on the basis of absolute integrity. Sixteen cases were investigated; 15 were found not genuine farmers. The fact that you keep a few chickens and a few fruit trees do not qualify you. One qualified, and he was given compensation as a farmer. And they can go and see the biggest lawyer in town. The answer will be the same. In fact, the more politics you bring into the matter, the more thoroughly we investigate it and make sure that the rules are observed. And the rules are made for everybody, not just for the general public. And that is the only way of governing -- one-man, one-vote.

When we say Area Licensing for coming into the CBD, we say, right. Sometimes the civil service haven't got the political touch. So they issued the circulars: All right, all superscale officers exempted. I had to countermand it. I said, "No, superscale officers including head of the civil service, including all ministers pay." That's how Singapore ticks.

Next, Dr. Lee. He says I misled you! In fact, we owe five billion dollars! You know, he is quite a clever man really, Dr. Lee Siew Choh, but a reckless man. He never bothered to learn seriously about the business of government. He has never grown up. You see, I can't make a statement and say

we got eight billion dollars in external reserves without somebody -- because all these figures are published by MAS, by the Finance Ministry -- telling him there is a debt of five billion. Yes, there is a debt of five billion. It is an internal debt of five billion -- money, loan, borrowed from the CPF -- loan to statutory boards for building houses, for power stations, for telephone exchanges. The assets are here. Our external debts amount to S\$570 million or 7% of our external assets. That's what we have achieved in 17 years. If you listened to them and spend away ... But ... they proposed to do it, we will be bankrupt in no time at all.

They start off ... for the English-educated it's a good slogan, you know: the caring society. It's actually a crib, it's plagiarism from the British Labour Party's: "The Compassionate Society." It sounds much better than 'caring'; it's 'compassionate'. You have compassion for the poor, for the disabled, for the less successful. You know the end result? It's not to each man his worth. They are no longer seeking in Britain equal opportunities. What they want is equal reward regardless of what your contribution is. That is a different game together.

So when I was asked in Australia: "Are you a socialist?" You see, it is a loaded question, because they know I don't agree with the new Left. I said, "Yes, perhaps an old-fashioned one." I believe in equal opportunities. I

believe the human being wants an equal chance with his fellow human being, regardless of his father's wealth or status in order that he can do his best, in order that he can compete and climb up to the top. And that is so, whether you are in Moscow, whether you are in Peking, whether you are in Washington or London. And you can't reverse human nature. When you try to do that, as the British Labour Party or a section of it has tried, then you bring a whole great people down. So they say, "Ah, that's elitism!" Competitive examinations, the creaming of the best into special institutions where they are made to go faster, where they will become high achievers and high performers for the society. They are penalised. Net result, the country suffers. Why should you try? In order that you will pay penalising taxes to keep the layabout happy.

You know, you can get three-quarters of your salary for somewhere between six to nine months of your first few months of unemployment. So they go round and say, "Well, let's sit back." They copied that in Australia and now they have got a new word called: "bludgeoning." So the world doesn't stand still.

The socialists found it -- or the Marxists amongst them -- found it: equal opportunities doesn't work to bring the society down. Equal opportunities

produce a society that rose quickly -- social mobility. They don't want that. The Marxists want revolution. They want discontent. So they propose all kinds of scatterbrain theories. It has ended up in huge public expenditure, which has led to government deficits in Britain of £12 billion per annum. All right, they are a wealthy, great nation, high technology -- North Sea oil. But even then, the IMF says: "Right, you will do the following things before we lend you the next US\$3½." Cut! Can you imagine the pound from \$8.75 for so long, went down to \$3.95?

Why do you think our Singapore dollar has held up? You get crackpots, scatterbrain schemes and the dollar immediately nose-dives. Because bankers, financiers calculate and they say, "Right, this means weakness." Bound to be. But they see our polices, they say, "Ah, good!"

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And let me tell you -- many of you here are working for the new banks, the new merchant houses, the offshore, banking -- financial institutions. If you want the Asian Dollar to be here and your Singapore dollar goes down with crackpot policies, you lose it. Why should anybody keep his money, transfer his money into Singapore? You've got to be stable, you've got to be strong, and to do that, like the Swiss, like the Germans, like the Japanese, they maintain very firm policies, fair and firm.

You know, when I was in Peking -- and they were quite frank -- they say, "We are socialists, we are not communists." Communism means from each his best to each his wants.

“各尽所能，各取所值”

They don't say: “各取所需”

Their new phrase: “各尽所能” (“From each according to his best”)

“按劳分配” (“From each according to his labour”)

And that's what been happening. There is an awful, big row going on between the so-called Cultural Revolutionists, the "Gang of Four", who say, "Managers" pay the same, get the same pay as the workers." What is the point of being a manager? You carry the can, you get the same pay as the worker? And the foreman gets the same pay? Doesn't work. And they have been quite honest. So they had to bring the troops down to Wuhan to restore order. And now slowly, more pragmatic, more practical policies will be pursued.

You have read and you have seen on television the communists that we have had to detain and who have been released because they publicly disavowed the use of violence. The highest ranking so far, best-educated -- some

EO, Nanyang graduates in the Income Tax Department; Polytechnic students, University of Singapore students who were from the Chinese schools.

I will tell you the reason why they have not done better. Because, every year, we give hundreds of scholarships. When I was a schoolboy, there were only 10, 12 scholarships. And to go abroad, there were only two. Now we give hundreds, so that anybody with the ability and the energy makes it. 120 to 150 go to top universities in the English-speaking world, every year. And the policy has paid. Otherwise, you've got some really bright fellows -- you won't be reading about Lee Siew Choh. His mind stopped in 1963. You know, he has never moved with the times.

You get a real bright young man -- with a whole group of very bright, frustrated people, and you are in deep trouble. But I say -- to each, according to his worth. But we balance up. If this were not a compassionate, humane society by comparison with any other country in the Third World, why do you think thousands, every year, pay \$4,000 special admission fee in order to go into our schools. And then they pay \$30 -- not \$2.50 for miscellaneous expenses for football, shuttlecocks and so on -- ping-pong balls -- and more in secondary schools. They pay these fees to come in here.

You say \$4 for a hospital patient. It is not enough to pay his food, for his linen and his pyjamas. It costs \$49. Why do you think pregnant women want to come to Singapore to give birth? Because then the child can become a Singapore citizen, isn't it? Then you are entitled to jobs, schooling, job, home, medical attention -- the whole works. Surely, that is a back-handed tribute to the society that we have built up. Thousands come in to seek medical treatment. Both in private hospitals and the doctors and specialists will tell you that. And in the government hospitals where they pay full charges.

I propose to carry this over till tomorrow. I think we will finish in about six minutes time.

Ask yourself the simple question: The people who now say they care for you -- not for themselves, of course -- where were they in 1968?

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You know, everybody thought we were going to collapse. When we called the elections to get ready for an emergency, there were no contest. Out of 65 seats, only 7 independents contested.

Dr. Lee was much younger, more vigorous. He could have shouted harder then. He kept his head very low and silent. He boycotted -- this is all

bogus. His mind again stopped in 1963 -- everything is bogus, including what he is saying, and he knows that it is bogus.

And Mr. Jeyaretnam, who cares for you, he kept out of sight, didn't he? But when we have done well, when we have got through -- when by 1972 we had made 13% growth a year for the last four years, 1968, '69, '70, '71, then he came out and started. What did he fight over? "Right of trial by jury", so that lawyers will have more money.

I don't believe in that. I don't believe we should model ourselves foolishly on some other society. We are different. We pick out elements. Identify the elements, which make a society succeed. Adapt it, modify it, incorporate it into our system.

Our unions are different. And I will tell you quite frankly. If we had British-style trade unionism, we are bankrupt. Finished! No chance! Not only the foreign investor, the local investor will take flight. He will take flight and take flight of his capital. It has not worked in Britain. It has worked in Germany because the Germans did not tolerate communists amongst their unions. They had lived too close to the communist border. There is East Germany, there is Czechoslovakia. It is just like Hong Kong, you know. And that is a very

serious competitor of ours. Anything we can do, they will do at lower wages. So that's a real check against wages taking off, beyond the bounds of reality.

So in many of the fields, where it is easy to move capital -- like garments, you have movable equipment -- we can't beat Hong Kong. We know that. When they had a recession, in 1974, the workers voluntarily took a cut in wages. They said: "Please, don't sack me, cut by 40%, even 50%, never mind. Just keep me on."

Not Singapore. We were luckier because we had diversified. Not just electronics and simple assembly of the transistor, but into higher electronics. Into pocket calculators of a very sophisticated kind, so much so, that we have been blocked from exporting calculators to the EEC because the British calculators couldn't compete, and we were selling too many calculators to Britain. So they got the Germans and said: "Look, stop the Singaporeans."

That is the "compassionate society" for you, you see. It is only for them, you know. Don't make this error of believing that they got compassion for us.

Of course, they criticised us. Why? Because we have not listened to them. We have done it our way. We've picked out the good elements of the Japanese, the Germans and incorporated it into our system. And for those of you who believe that parliamentary democracy is the answer, let me read you what Mr. Roy Jenkins, who was their one successful British Labour Party Chancellor - he was Chancellor after devaluation in 1967 up till 1970 and he made the pound recover -- and he was given up because the left-wing has no time for him and in the leadership contest when Mr. Wilson resigned, he lost. So he is going to become Chairman of the EEC. You will remember, he happens to be friend of mine because I like his policies. They were realistic. But the Labour Party, left-wing MPs, who were the majority and the unions loathe him. So he is out. To be Chairman of the EEC. In other words, almost retiring from British politics unless by some miracle he can find a way back. And this is what he said when he retired:

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“Farewell to the lobby correspondents, the parliamentary correspondents”, he says. Looking back on his 26 years in the House of Commons, Mr. Jenkins deplored: “The gladiatorial contest and the Utopianism of the Opposition summarised by the claim: Change the government and everything will come right. We ought to have learned that few precepts are more superficial than that.”

When you are in a jam you change governments, you are still in a jam. Otherwise, the temptation for us is a very great one --just opt out for one year. Gives Singapore a dose of real instability, real madness -- then come back. Welcomed as heroes.

But that's not the way life is. When we come back, we will find a ruined economy, confidence gone, civil service which we built up, laboriously over 17 years, geared it to serve you, will be in ruins, and we may not recover for decades. That's what it is all about.

The Ceylonese tried it. They had one of the best civil service in the world, built up by the British, is the example of gradualism. University of Ceylon -- equal to any in the world. Trained administrators. And then the open bid -- free education, subsidised rice, Sinhalese as the national language, Buddhism as the national religion. Hell let loose. Humpty-Dumpty sat on the wall. Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall. It's a tremendous job putting Humpty-Dumpty together again. It has been two decades; never been put together again.

That's a fact of life. You ask yourself what happened in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh? They had to scrap it. Why? You know, the Times of

India man asked me in Kuala Lumpur: “Am I putting the right values to you?” You know, I was a guest in foreign grounds; I didn’t want to start an argument. What I wanted to ask him was: “Don’t you think that if we had put the wrong values in, we would be bankrupt and broke?” Why do you think Mrs. Gandhi had to scrap the Opposition and imposed Emergency rule? It was going down the drain, you know. Whether it can come up, I don’t know. Why do you think President Marcos imposed Martial Law?

We are not Britain. We cannot be Britain. Remember that. And this is what Mr. Jenkins, the one successful Chancellor, who is watching with sadness: “Once you get into a jam don’t believe”, says he, “change the government and everything will come right. No few precepts are more superficial than that.” And the gladiatorial contest. It is not because we were able to get the better of Lim Yew Hock or David Marshal, that Singapore ticks.

That’s not the reason.

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You know, quite frankly, Mr. Jeyaretnam is quite a modest man. Because in his manifesto he refers to the PAP as clever men and so on. Well, we will have no trouble disposing of him and his arguments because he is a man who is modest and have grounds to be modest. But what you have not got, what I have not got is that leeway to make mistakes. We haven’t got a broad

economic base -- an agricultural economy, wheat, cattle, sheep, copper, uranium, iron ore, name it and they have got it. But soft-headed policies and they are running at 15% inflation, and the problem that still cannot be cured.

I suggest we don't do that. Stick to hard-headed policies that has found jobs for everybody. We have got 31,000 on the books in the Labour Ministry. But you send out the cards. No, I can't tell you these things, if they are not true because all the reporters got to do is to go down to the Labour Ministry clerk and say: "Look, is it true?" And they will tell you that when they send cards out for jobs, you send out 200 cards, lucky if you get 30 or 40 coming, looking for the jobs because many of them have put themselves down for better jobs. And when they see, "Oh, this is the job", they say, "Boho-la, mai, pisay, key-lo."

Lee Siew Choh understands all that. Mr. Jeyaretnam never will. If he is really serious, I suggest to him, instead of reading more Fabian Society tracts, better start learning a little bit of Hokkien and Mandarin. So until tomorrow.

Thank you.

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