

SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER, MR LEE KUAN YEW,  
AT PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION 20TH ANNIVERSARY RALLY  
AT NATIONAL THEATRE ON SATURDAY, 29 NOV 80

On the 20th anniversary of the People's Association, I record my gratefulness to all those who, as members of the MC and CCC, have contributed to the cohesion and coherence of our society. In 1960, there was no Singaporean society, because there were no Singaporeans. There were distinct, self-contained communities of Chinese: Hokkiens, Cantonese, Hakkas, etc; Malays: Rhio Malays, Javanese, Boyanese, etc; Tamils, Malayalis, Punjabis, Eurasians, and so on. Social groupings were confined to ethnic, or language, or dialect, or religious, or cultural bonds. People socialised with those who shared either the same village or country in China or in India, or the same surname, or shared a common origin outside Singapore. Slowly in the 1960s, and with increasing speed in the 1970s, the political turmoil and social changes brought about new social groupings based on members sharing the same economic or cultural interests. A more homogenous society, conscious of sharing a common political destiny, is the result.

In August 1980, the PA had 155 Management Committees, with 2,239 members, plus 184 honorary patrons. Some major changes, in the nature of the leadership of the MCs, are worth noting. The English-educated in 1966 were 14% of MC members; in 1980, 38%. Chinese-educated in 1966 were 70%, in 1980, 57%. Malay-educated in 1966 were 14%, in 1980, 3%. Tamil-educated in 1966 were 2%; in 1980, 0.2%. These changes reflect the different educational streams the younger members have gone through. The Malays and Indians were the first to opt for the English stream.

In August this year, there were 69 CCCs, with 1747 members, 663 of whom were also MC members. The most important new development is the formation of the RCs (Residents' Committees). For several years, there was debate and doubt as to the wisdom of building up RCs. The HDB had enough work on its hands. The formation of RCs would create greater pressure on the Area Estates Officers - demands for quicker attention, for repairs and maintenance of lifts and other services.

In 1977, we launched two RC pilot projects in Marine Parade and Tanjong Pagar. They were successful. In 1978, we launched a further 5 pilot projects: Ang Mo Kio, Boon Lay, Bukit Merah, Kolam Ayer and Toa Payoh. They also proved to be pluses: they made for better interaction among residents

in the new estates, and through RCs between residents and HDB, PUB, TAS, and other statutory boards. RCs consist of residents. They are keen in improving their physical environment. They live in the blocks. In October this year, we have a total of 2,648 members in 183 RCs in 53 constituencies. They have improved life for the residents of the zones of 3, 4 to 5 blocks each RC represents. Residents have got to know other better and to look after their common facilities. RC activities are film shows, public performance, picnics, clean-up campaigns, children's parties, fund-raising by collections of old newspapers and clothing, block visits to meet residents. All these have helped to build a stronger community spirit.

Broadly speaking, the CCCs are more Chinese-educated, with more older people in their 50's and 60's. The MCs are more English-educated and younger, people in their 40's and 50's. The RCs are even more English-educated, over 60%, and younger still, people in their 20's and 30's. At present, about 10% of the RC members are members of the CCCs or MCs. There is little doubt that in the next 10 years, 60% to 70% of the MCs and CCCs will be from the RCs. The target for 1985 should be 40% of RC members in the MCs and CCCs, and 70% by 1990. This is a logical and inevitable development. The RC members live in the zones they represent. They are today's counterparts of the ketua kampong, the street or community elder. All reports are consistent: there

is more intimacy between RC members and the residents they live amongst, than between MC or CCC members and these HDB residents. Many constituencies have already co-opted active RC members into the MCs and into the CCCs. There is advantage, during the monthly CCC meetings, to have reports from the RCs as a regular item on the agenda.

RCs in the older HDB estates, which have no 4- or 5-room blocks, have less educated RC leaders. If MCs and CCCs are to be confined to residents of their constituencies, these old HDB constituencies will not have enough educated talent. The better educated talents are found in the 4-, 5- room and HUDC blocks. This is inevitably so in a society based on merit. So talent spotting ground leadership is most difficult in the older constituencies with a high percentage of 1- and 2-room blocks. Ninety-nine percent of 1- and 2-room flats are on rentals. Successful children of these tenants leave for the 3-, 4- and 5-room flats. Other transient families fill up vacant flats, transient because they are in transit, waiting to go up the socio-economic ladder. Fortunately, even in the 1-room blocks, it is possible to draw out a few, though not enough, residents to provide leadership.

The HDB must correct this shortcoming when rebuilding the older 1- and 2-room estates. Each constituency must be given its quota of 3-, 4- and 5-room blocks. It is inevitable that the most successful will not be living in HDB estates. Until this year, there were no plans to incorporate HUDC units into the estates. Even when HUDC units are incorporated into these new towns, only a few of the more fortunate constituencies carved out of the new towns will have HUDC units. Therefore, better educated people from outside the constituency must be inducted into MCs and CCCs. My estimates is that, well beyond the year 1990, some 30% of the leadership of each constituency, both of MCs and CCCs, will be from outside the constituency, men not from the ranks of the RCs. This is the pattern for the future. We shall make adjustments earlier if all present MCs and CCCs recognise and accept that this pattern is the norm. Older CCC and MC members should actively co-opt and adopt the young and active from the RCs into the MCs and CCCs, and get them to assume responsibility for the whole constituency instead of only their own zones.

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We have had 20 years of successful community development.

There has been a smooth interflow of policy decisions going down to the ground and objective feedback from the ground which has enabled policies to be modulated and modified. This feedback has been valuable in formulating new policies. With the RCs well established by 1985, coordination and cooperation

between RCs and MCs, RCs and CCCs, will provide the government with more comprehensive feedback on its policies and so improve the quality of life for all.

Tonight, allow me to record the government's appreciation of the good work done by thousands who have given freely of their time and their money in the MCs and the CCCs for the last 20 years. Without their voluntary works, there could not have been an effective People's Association. Without an effective People's Association, the government would have lacked an important arm for effective implementation of its policies. I thank you all.

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