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SPEECH BY THE CHIEF MINISTER, MR. LIM YEW HOCK,
AT THE OPENING OF THE TRADE AND INDUSTRIES EX-
HIBITION AT THE GREAT WORLD, AT 6.45 P.M. ON
FRIDAY, AUGUST 22, 1958

The moral of this Trade and Industry Fair would seem to be that trade and industry are not only essential but can be glamorous, and I am happy to be here to see our economic problems in brilliant lights, ingenious displays, and introduced by feminine charm. It is a change from the hard light and conventional file of the problems as they come over our ministerial desks - and a good change, for I think fairs of this kind are a decided advantage not only to remind us of the importance of trade and industry, but to make us proud of it - to make us all proud of it. Now that we are a homeland of citizens, it is of importance to every member of the community to know how our household income is earned, and how much is earned.

There is no division of earners and spenders, and we must not allow ourselves to have two separate personalities, a drudge who earns and a walter mitty who spends. There has been a divided outlook. Those whose income is low have fought for a better distribution of our income by means of higher wages and better social services provided by the Government - and we, as a Government -

are proud of the great-improvements we have been able to achieve over the past three years of our stewardship. If they have not considered where the money is to come from the industrial and commercial leaders on the other hand have not gone out to introduce themselves to the public, fearing perhaps the effects of too close a public interest.

Whatever the reason, the collective public relations of the commercial community have never been fully developed. Perhaps it is true that the success of our industrial and commercial leaders in building up the prosperity of Singapore has been too much taken for granted - but that makes my point, for now that 600,000 voters choose governments and policies, what they think of these achievements is of over-riding importance. There can be no aloofness in our new family, and the closer commerce and industry identify themselves with the life of the community of which they are an integral and not an alien part, the more its importance will be realised. If it is generally realised that the goose of our economy is not an alien bird but lives in our compound, there will be less incentive to kill the goose to get the golden eggs. We must kill this belief that our economy is alien to us. It is our Singapore economy, but it must be given the climate in which to work because all of us depend on its products.

This means too that we must collectively be proud of our economic institutions because they give us our standing in the world, and our measure of the part we play in building up the contribution of the economy of Asia to the changing pattern of the economic world. We should all be proud of the skills which earn our income and have regular celebrations, each proud of his contribution to the wealth and skills of the community. We should organise an annual Singapore Trade and Industry Day with processions and festivities. We should not turn our back on our ways of earning our living, but take colourful pride in our achievements and hearten ourselves for our future achievements.

But to return to this fair, I am glad to have the opportunity of opening this fair. It represents the marketplace which we are and must continue to be. It reminds us that if the constitutional path to independence has been cleared, we have still to solve our economic problems and build our self-governing state on a strong and stable economic

foundation. It is a problem of hard thinking and hard work, not of ideological theorising. Singapore exists to prove no theory - we seek to be no guinea-pig in an ideological laboratory, no dog in a sputnik seeking the moon. We seek only to realise here in Singapore for our own people what needs no greater argument than human dignity that is the highest level of life for all our citizens in the newly-enlarged family of our State of Singapore. And for that reason I am grateful to the management for the facilities they have given for the civic exhibition under the title "Our Singapore".

Although our problem has been defined so often, let me repeat it. On the limited space of a small island occupying a commercially and internationally strategic position, we have a population growing at the rate of one new citizen every eight minutes. In the next 8 years our population will increase to two million. And our population will be increasingly young, for when our population reaches two million, 46% will be 14 years of age and under. The new generation has come to expect a higher standard in their homeland than many of their parents achieved in their land of adoption. They expect jobs in the future and we will certainly not find jobs for them or the money to build schools, hospitals, and houses for them by running freely in well-worn grooves, or by forcing our economy into political strait-jackets, with unrealistic ideologies which are as misleading guides as unrealistic dreams.

We wish to increase industrialisation not only to give more work, but to give a wider diversity of interesting work to make the fully-rounded community which self-government implies. As my friend the Minister for Commerce and Industry has announced, we aim to give some selective protection to encourage local industries, but we recognise that commerce will continue to play the major part in our economy. Our policy is, and will always be, one of positive action to encourage goods and capital to come and seek here materially beneficial investment and employment.

We have, an excellent natural harbour with the best of man-made institutions to make it into one of the world's greatest market places. We are building our airport to ensure that every facility is given for traffic in people and goods to come here from all nations. We realise that our services must be both economical and efficient, and that only if we can provide a better and cheaper entrepot service for others than they can provide for themselves will our neighbours continue to trade with us. While they trade with us, the buyers of their products and those who wish to sell finished goods to them will always come here. We do not wish to be dragged into trade wars for national aggrandisement. We seek to be a stabilising and enriching influence in South East Asia: and in an Asia where the pattern of production is changing industrially, and where governments are striving for the more rapid achievement of the welfare of their people, we are adapting ourselves to meet the needs, and aspirations of the people of Asia and those who seek to serve them.

I hope that those who visit the fair will enjoy it and learn from it, and with this wish, with my congratulations to the organisers, it is with eager anticipation that I declare this 1958 Trade and Industry Exhibition open.

AUGUST 22, 1958.

(Time issued 1830 hours).