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**SPEECH BY DR ONG CHIT CHUNG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(HOME AFFAIRS & LABOUR) AND MP FOR BUKIT BATOK,  
AT THE BUKIT BATOK RC ZONE 6 NATIONAL DAY GET-TOGETHER,  
AT BLK 169 BUKIT BATOK WEST AVENUE 8,  
ON SATURDAY, 15 AUGUST 1992, AT 4.00 PM.**

The Censorship Review Committee, headed by Professor Tommy Koh, recently commissioned the Price Waterhouse Management Consultants to do a survey on the "Changing Moral Values and Public Perception of Certain Printed, Audio and Visual Materials". The survey confirmed what we have known for a long time, that the moral attitudes of Singaporeans are basically Asian and conservative. Ours is not the liberal Western society, nor given to permissiveness and excesses.

Some are surprised, almost shocked, by the results of the survey. A few were quick to criticise the sample size or the methodology. Some quarters even condemned what they labelled the 'hypocrisy' factor in the responses of those surveyed. They welcome the relatively liberal attitudes of those with tertiary education as accurate, but chose to fault, disbelieve or ignore the findings on the conservative attitudes of the majority.

No survey of this nature can be all encompassing or totally comprehensive. But it does give a reasonably accurate gauge of public opinion or attitudes on moral issues. We must not reject the survey out of hand, or pick and choose, believing only those parts we like. We should also see it, in perspective, as a survey on Singaporean attitudes, not what they do or will do in a given situation.

Rather than being perplexing or confusing, many will find the survey results to be clear and reassuring, indicating that Singaporeans prefer to set high moral standards for

themselves. Singapore society is indeed more conservative than the impression one may get from the English media.

Singaporeans may not always live up to the standards they set, but they know what is right and wrong. It is one thing for some people to have mistresses; it is another for people to parade their partners openly and undermine the institutions of marriage and the family.

The survey gives a fairly good picture of the moral compass of a cross-section of Singaporeans, and shows the preferences of Singaporeans and what they consider to be socially acceptable norms of behaviour. It indeed confirms that the majority of Singaporeans want a wholesome environment in which they can bring up their children.

No analyst or policy maker can afford to ignore the findings of this survey. One may call this the middle ground of the HDB heartland. We must give due consideration to the preferences of the moral majority, or the silent majority, in the HDB heartland, and not just pamper the more vocal minority.

Perhaps the liberals fear that the Censorship Review Committee will take the survey seriously. But if the majority of the population say explicitly that they do not want Playboy or Penthouse sold in Singapore, why should their wishes be disregarded?

The point that emerges from this survey is that we should not ape the West blindly, though we cannot be totally immune from its influence. We have our own cultural values and traditions, and should pick and choose to adopt what is appropriate in our context.

It is against our interest to make Singapore society more permissive. Government policy should foster conservative Asian values.

"Liberals" in the media should not exploit their positions to propagate their views and open up Singapore society, e.g. the article in BT Executive Lifestyle (8-9 August 92). They must understand their social responsibility.

This is a matter for Singaporeans to decide. The BT article cited Dr David Throll, "a psychologist who lectures at the National Institute of Education" to comment on the survey. David Throll is a New Zealander. Is he an expert on surveys in Asia? He is entitled to his views and to express them, but Singaporeans should get rid of the colonial mentality of not accepting things to be true until someone from the West pronounces them so.

Unfortunately, some still suffer from the colonial mentality, though Western imperialism has been officially buried. There remains this intellectual subservience or slavery to the West.

All said and done, we should leave it to the Censorship Review Committee to deliberate and decide on the guidelines, without fear or favour, and unfettered by any preconceived ideas. They should be left free to interpret and form their own conclusions, and to make their recommendations.

Thank you.

LABOUR/PASaug15.'92

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