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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT ONG TENG CHEONG
AT THE SWEARING-IN OF THE NEW CABINET
HELD AT CITY HALL CHAMBER
ON SATURDAY, 25 JANUARY 1997**

Singapore's economic and social achievements are plain for all to see: high growth, rising incomes, improving standards of housing, education, and health care, and better lives for all Singaporeans. This prosperity and progress depend on good government and political stability. At every general election, the country's future is at stake. If the results turn out well for Singapore, we can look forward to more years of prosperity. If not, all our achievements can be quickly frittered away.

Having served three-and-a-half years as the first elected President, I can attest to the importance of having a good, honest and thrifty government. As the elected President, I hold the second key to the spending of the nation's past reserves. But I can only act on knowledge. I can veto proposed spending that is likely to encroach on past reserves only if and when I come to know of such a transaction. I still have to depend on the key office holders to be honest with me and keep me informed. Ultimately, it boils down to having honest and incorruptible people at the helm of the government if the nation's hard-earned savings are not to be squandered.

In this election, the voters have given a clear mandate to the leadership team of Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, to his government's track record, and

its programme to make Singapore Our Best Home. Singapore is well placed to take advantage of the abundant opportunities in the region, and advance confidently into the 21st century.

Notwithstanding all our achievements, Singapore is still a young country. Our political traditions and norms are not yet well established. They are still evolving. For our political system to work, good men and women must come forward to offer themselves to serve the nation. Voters must elect and support a team which can govern the country competently, honestly, and imaginatively. Each time voters show that they understand their own long term interests, our system becomes more securely anchored, and more likely to endure.

Many new Members of Parliament (MPs) have been elected in this general election. They will have to establish themselves as men and women with ideas, commitment, and passion. They will also have to establish rapport with the people. As they gain experience and maturity, they will shoulder heavier responsibilities. Singapore's future depends on them, and more of them every five years.

Passing on the torch of leadership is a never ending process. More capable and committed people, especially younger ones, must come forward to serve. Singapore needs them. Every generation must produce leaders who measure up to the high demands we have established and still need, to lead the nation. The best must help to build and strengthen Singapore, not leave the task to others or, worse, attack the system which has nurtured them without offering a better alternative. Then only can we realise our aspirations, and create a bright future for ourselves.

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