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# Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS), AT THE INSTALLATION DINNER OF  
ALPHA CHAPTER, INTERNATIONAL Y'S MEN'S CLUB OF SINGAPORE  
AT THE BELVEDERE, MANDARIN HOTEL,  
ON SUNDAY, 10 JULY 1988 AT 8.00 PM**

When Mr Edward Ong invited me to officiate this function, I was hesitant for I feared that I might not be the right person to be present here tonight. However, after talking to people who are close to this organisation, I felt more than convinced that I should.

Going through a list of projects and contributions that the organisation had organised for the past four years, it is manifestly clear that I am addressing a group of people who can be proud of their contributions to the society and Singapore.

By focusing your activities to the less fortunate segment of society, you have upheld an extremely important element in our philosophy - caring for the less successful, less privileged and less fortunate amongst us. It is therefore most appropriate for me to extend my sincere thanks for your commitment and generosity to the people.

I hope the group will look into new areas where contributions could be made to ensure that the less fortunate feel that they are wanted and are full members of our society.

The world is a changed place now. The creation of modern and sophisticated telecommunications systems have made the world so small that we are much more closer to events and developments taking place in the other hemisphere.

The most significant impact of such developments can be seen in the field of politics that the most hardened "isolationist" countries are unable to prevent their inadequacies from being known to the world. It is because of such pressures that caused leaders like Deng Xiaoping and Gorbachev to respond by introducing reforms to create a more open society and achieve a higher standard of living, even if it means having to change long-held policies and ideological dogmas.

To the Singapore society which thrive on free enterprise, open trade and free flow of information, the pressure is even greater. However, our size and regional realities dictate certain constraints that require us to protect some basic fundamentals which had helped us to create what we have now.

It is true that given the competitive nature of society of the world today, the most creative and most innovative among them will succeed. It is also true that the most able in society who learn and absorb new ideas will be the one that will succeed. The modern communications system provides us with unlimited lessons and options for us to learn and choose.

But lessons, experiences and options offered from other societies are not meant for total adoption and implementation. Experiences in other countries show that the most prudent and intelligent among the "learners" will be the most successful one.

The Fijian experience is a case in point. After studying our tripartite arrangement for wage increases for the workers, some of them decided that they should have their own "National Wage Council". So the unions which had in the past been left to themselves to conduct their own negotiations through collective agreements for wage

increases were invited to join their NWC. Thinking that they had been denied their right and fair share, they broke away from the tripartite membership and formed a political party. The outcome of the election and the resulting military takeover is well known to us.

Singapore succeeds because we are cautious in learning from the experiences of other countries. We need to be creative and innovative to better our society. But at the same time, we must not be ignorant of our realities and constraints. We are small and multiracial - factors which can be both asset and liability. It is up to us to use these factors to our advantage.

Multiracialism has provided Singapore with richness in culture, philosophy and ideas. But it also gives our society multiplicity in perceptions, belief and idiosyncracies. Unless we are conscious and sensitive in our dealings with the others, we may unconsciously create misunderstanding, tensions and problems.

In our endeavour to better our society, it is prudent for us to seek common areas of activities and emphasize the existing similarities than the differences among us. This will make our effort more meaningful and more acceptable for in doing so, we have removed the elements of suspicion and doubt.

On that note, I wish to thank the Alpha Chapter, International Y's Men's Club for inviting me tonight to the Installation Dinner. I hope the Alpha Chapter will be blessed with greater success in future.

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