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WE WANT JEYA!

TO GOVERN A NATION

'BREAK - THROUGH

... to greater social awareness

THE BREAKTHROUGH TEAM

WISHES ALL READERS

A HAPPY NEW YEAR

publisher's note

The recent publicity in the Press regarding the renewal of BREAKTHROUGH's printing permit left an important question which interested readers must be asking, and that is, how justified are the Ministry of Culture's allegations against BREAKTHROUGH?

In our letter to the Ministry to "show cause why our permit should be renewed", we explained and pointed out that the Ministry's observations were completely unfounded and that her interpretation of our stories was a distorted one based on taking paragraphs out of their context. As such, we could not agree with her that our trend was 'unhealthy'.

The Ministry must have been satisfied with our explanations, and our permit was renewed.

We assure readers that our editorial policy is not compromised in any way and that while we may be amateurs in the field of publishing, we certainly endeavour to be professional in our handling of issues and stories. We believe readers will understand that a magazine like BREAKTHROUGH will contain facts and opinions, and trust that they can discern one from the other.

The real test for BREAKTHROUGH, and this is as much a test for her readers, would be whether the quality of editorial content can be maintained and improved upon with each passing issue.

We know that there are multi-facets to any problem and are only too aware of what the official angle is. We hope that together with our readers, we can tease out the different threads of the issues involved so as to reach deeper understanding and to kindle the vision of a society based on care and concern.

BREAKTHROUGH also offers a movement for those concerned enough to want to do something. The ideals we uphold will not spring spontaneously into being without some conscious actions of those who share these ideals.

In this respect, we are glad to note that readers have stepped forth to work with us on BREAKTHROUGH and other social concern projects such as the Crisis Centre we are developing (see inside story).

We welcome readers to join us, be it your physical presence at editorial meetings, your letters and comments to the editor, or active participation in the development of social concern projects. (So start coming in, folks.)

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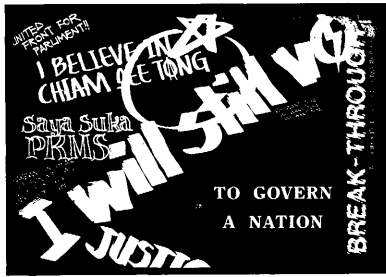
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- *Louis Cheng *Chan Wai Han
- *Pong Hoe Fang *Antoni Gan
- *Kuah Khun Eng *Thomas Tan
- *Tan Loo Tiong

OBJECTIVES OF BREAKTHROUGH

- *to generate discussion and thought on subjects which go beyond personal gains
- *to help in the development of concerned individuals and caring human beings
- *to help establish a sense of community belonging.
- ***BREAKTHROUGH** is a quarterly published by LKF Publishers. All correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, P. O. Box 357, Ang Mo Kio West, Singapore 9156

contents

DROP A LINE	4
COVER STORY	8
<p>To Govern a Nation: This article points to the importance of an opposition force in Parliament as a complement to good government and rejects the notion that opposition must necessarily oppose or be bad for a small nation. It goes on to suggest how opposition parties can strengthen their present status and urges some responsibility and thought on their part.</p>	
PLAY REVIEW	22
<p>Robert Yeo's "One Year Back Home" is under scrutiny again. This time it is seen as a monument to the achievements of the ruling party in Singapore.</p>	
THE WAY WE ARE	24
What For	24
<p>Smugness and Altruism meet in a coffee-house. In the ensuing conversation, a clash of values highlights the measures of worth in today's world, and of the dreamers who still believe that people can, and should care.</p>	
A Reader Writes.....	27
<p>A reader writes about the realism of today's world and people's struggle for material well-being. He then offers an explanation why people are what they are, ending on the hopeful note that ultimately everything will be fine again.</p>	
MUSIC	30
<p>David Bowie — a disillusioned singer with his anguished songs keeps popping the question "Why be a Hero?". His conclusion? Avoid trying to be more than what you are otherwise it will only frustrate you. This is the sad story of a man resigned to events in the world after attempting to change things, and failing to do so.</p>	
SHORT STORY	34
<p>Beth. Of memories, friendship,.....nostalgia</p>	
CRISIS CENTRE	36
<p>A brief introduction to the first action project initiated by BREAK-THROUGH and some concerned readers.</p>	
POEM: I Saw You There	37
ISSUES ROUNDUP	40
<p>A look is taken at some coupon parking woes and a case suggested for CASE to investigate. In The Naming Game, the Ministry of Education is criticised for their arbitrary action on re-writing the names of pre-primary and primary one students. Clipped Wings — A short review of the SIAPA case and the tremendous reactions it provoked. The Personality Trap throws up some thoughts on the nature of organisations in general and points to the importance of built-in checks against the unilateral actions of powerful personalities, and of increasing accountability of leaders to the people.</p>	

Drop a line

Dear Editor

I feel that 'social awareness' should include the 'exposure' of hypocrisies and double-standards. However, such exposures are bound to incur the wrath of those who are implicated or likely to be implicated.

The natural response from these people would be to smear or, better still, to clamp down the smart alecks involved. Such a response is based on the premise that 'I should kill you first before you kill me'. This can be neatly executed with the subtle manipulation of power. After all, in those grey areas of social life, what is morally right or morally wrong is dependent on the definition of those in power. Even if there is one amongst the powerful who feels otherwise he is not likely to speak against the hypocrisies and double-standards of his peers. Moreover, the powerful are often surrounded by retainers and henchmen, who for the sake of their own....., are willing to sell their souls and sing the praises of their masters.

Anyway, let it be known that I desire the BREAKTHROUGH to be a positive force — positive in the sense of perseverance, positive in telling the ordinary people about the plain facts of our problems and above all, positive about seeking solutions to these problems.

'POSITIVE'
Singapore

There are provisions presently for the withdrawal of CPF funds for the purchase of HDB

and HUDC flats, SBS shares, etc. I hope that with all the present discussions about the releasing of more CPF funds for optimal usage, the government will consider allowing a certain percentage of one's CPF to be withdrawn for emergency purposes such as meeting the funeral expenses of an unexpected death. Right now, families which have little or no real savings in hand find it difficult to pay for unforeseen emergencies and many have resorted to borrowing from unofficial money-lenders. Interest rates are heavy and the family may finally suffer much hardship in trying to repay the loan when all the time this could have been avoided if they could have withdrawn some of their CPF funds.

I mention funeral expenses particularly because this is an aspect of culture which the Chinese feel deeply about. When a parent dies, it is considered only right and proper that he/she be buried with some ceremony.

Of course, there is the danger of abuse such as the withdrawing of too much funds for what some may consider to be 'unnecessary' ceremonies. But surely one should be given some leeway in determining how one can spend the money which is rightfully his? Besides, the government can draw up some guidelines to control the amount that can be withdrawn for such emergencies. They can even draw up guidelines to determine what constitutes an 'emergency' and which qualifies for such withdrawals.

'FILIAL SON'
Singapore 1954



I am a stranger to BREAKTHROUGH, although I knew of its existence. It was not until it was accused of half-truths that drew me closer to it. The publicity (it proves that at times it does pay to be exposed, although not necessarily in the best of light) made me buy the second and third issues. The cover story of the later issue, "In Search of Identity" is invigorating and thought-provoking — one of your objectives to be so, no doubt. It is a good analysis of the problem.

I believe that one of the most important ingredients of national identity is that of intermarriage. A sense of belonging can be strengthened further by the feeling that every one of us is "one" — physically and ideologically. All the togetherness which superficialities such as national songs, national costumes and whatever else can muster in order to lead us to think that we are "one" cannot equal the knowledge that we are "physically one".

That mixed marriage among our many people of different ethnic groups is a condition for the emergence of a national identity is not exactly true. It has to be a natural occurrence and acceptance, much like the evolution of things in their right order.

The problem which hinders the course of intermarriage here is one of religion. The difficulty arise when Keng Seng does not want to become a Muslim should he fall in love and want to marry Hamida, or that she

would not discard her religion for love. Why cannot the Chinese embrace Islam if love conquers all?

Without sounding too ruminative about the culture and origin of the Babas, I venture that they have what we are all looking for today — the Singaporean. I am not maintaining that we should all be like the Babas. This is merely a personal observation.

To summarize, inter-ethnic marriage all round is not something which must take place if a national identity is to come forth. But it could help a great deal.

Felix Chia
Singapore 1129

I'm glad that you've obtained renewal of permit to publish your magazine. I would be very sorry if the 'BREAKTHROUGH' team has to stop working on the magazine. I feel that a magazine such as yours demonstrates that there are young people who care about others — the aged, the poor, etc — and the socio-economic conditions of society. I hope your magazine would be able to inspire your readers to care about others and to be concerned about the social problems and issues too.

Ng Guat Tin
Singapore 0315



I almost want to laugh at the nonsense situation that you are caught up in. Here you are trying to write a half-way decent commentary of contemporary issues; something that the newspapers and journals in your area stay away from. In turn, as the issue of you being allowed to publish is pushed through, the leading papers and journals continue to sit on the fence with regard to the main issue — that of a free press. It seems that the newspapers are more interested in bureaucratic intrigue than with fundamental issues.

I also read with great interest your article on Identity, and the problems of Identity for any group of people. However, I would beg to differ in that I do not think that the test of Identity be to stay and fight when there is the possibility of escape. Might not a better test be the perpetuation of a people and their way of life after subjugation? A recent example might be the Poles. Poland has been overrun and dominated by Russia for many years now. The Polish church was denied an existence for over 25 years. Yet the Polish people have displayed remarkable courage and cultural vigor by striking, challenging their domination, re-establishing the church to the forefront, putting cultural identity to work.

*Bill Jung
Hawaii*

If BREAKTHROUGH aims to stimulate thinking and generate discussion, then it must search itself for its direction and areas of

growth. Otherwise there will be lack of coherence in the string of topics of interest that the magazine may come up with in the foreseeable future. And the public interest may die a natural death.

*Liew Chee Sehg
Singapore 0409*

Ed: We agree that BREAKTHROUGH must constantly search itself for new areas of growth, and strive to achieve a definite theme in the kind of topics put forth. In fact, we have plans for a whole new format to be introduced for the next four issues of BREAKTHROUGH. This would help delineate various areas of interest for discussion, and establish a definite identity for the magazine.

However, we want to stress also that BREAKTHROUGH is meant for the general public, and have to run stories on a wide range of topics to cater for different interests. As such we cannot possibly be all things to all men. What we can do is to have a higher percentage of articles on the social topics with which we are concerned.

I feel happy reading BREAKTHROUGH for it gives me a glimmer of hope to know that there are people — young people who care about society.

If we want our young to grow up as caring individuals, we must give them a chance to. BREAKTHROUGH is one way. So keep it up.

*Lim Yang Hua
Singapore 2470*

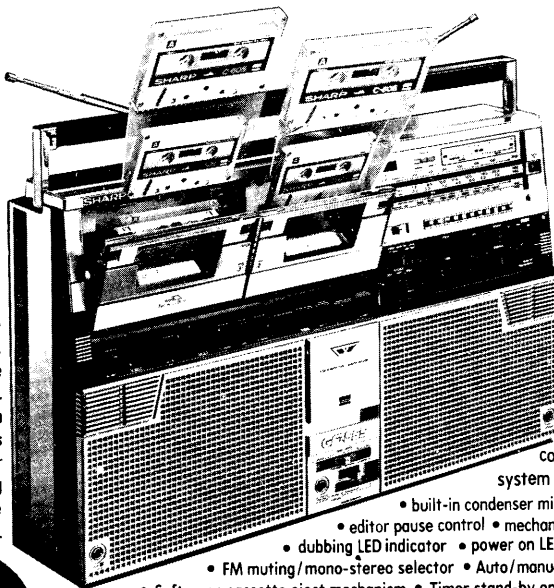
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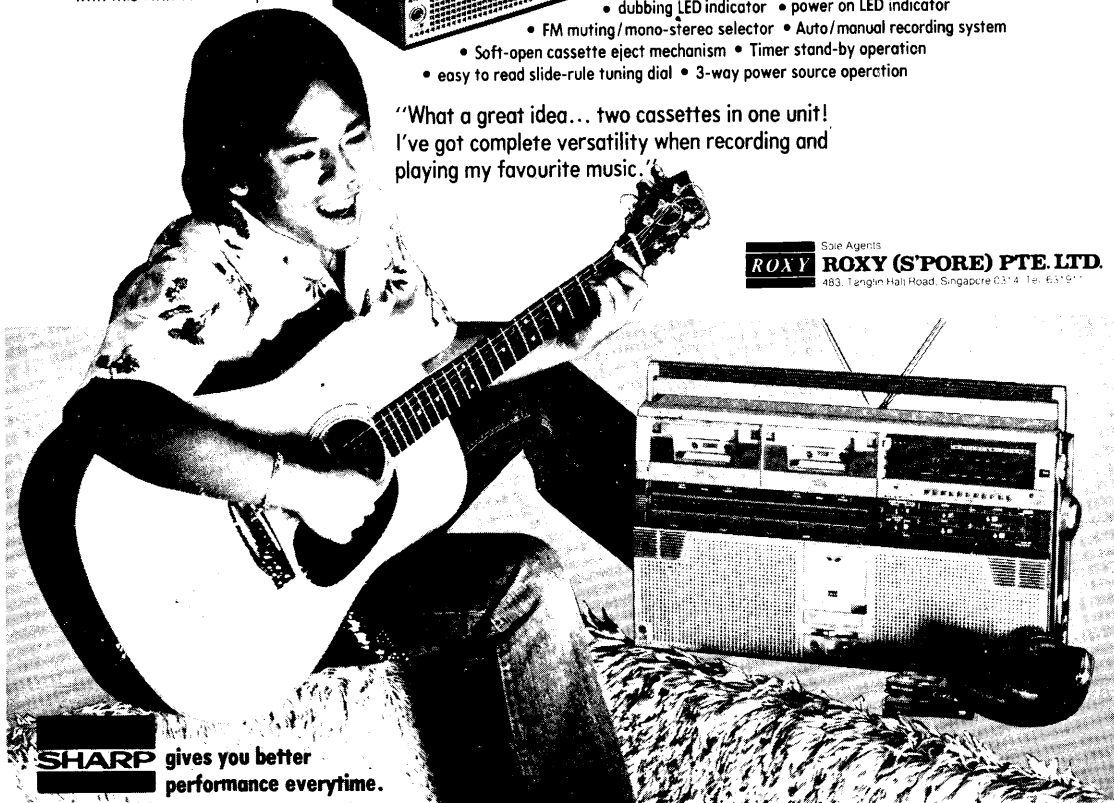
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TO GOVERN A NATION

PROLOGUE

Politics has an invisible, and sometimes not-so-invisible hand in our daily lives. The issues we discuss, the way we think, the work we do, the rewards we get, the direction we head for, all these are shaped by the thought and values of people who have the power to initiate, influence and change policies and events. Politics, in the broad sense, is the art or science of this process. The thinking man must necessarily be aware of how his life is being affected and shaped, and, depending on his conviction, the caring man will actively involve himself in helping to accentuate the process, or attempt to reshape it and change the destiny of the nation. The process of electing a government is one of the major means by which a people can shape their own destinies.....

. . . by fong hoe fang

The Singapore Situation

It is uncommon, even impossible, to find another political situation in the world today, which is similar to that of Singapore's where a single political party has captured all seats in Parliament for 4 consecutive terms over the past 13 years. One pundit even went so far as to say that if there is something that one can predict with 100% accuracy, it is the results of a General Election in Singapore.

The reasons for this state of affairs are many and varied, ranging from cries of 'foul play', 'repressive tactics', 'ingrained fear', to that of 'weak and ineffectual opposition parties.'

Whatever the case, the reasons have been too well-worn to bear repetition now. What is more important is to examine the implications and consequences of such a political situation for our people, and ultimately the relationship between government and society.

Historical Background

When the People's Action Party (PAP) came into electoral power in 1959, winning 43 out of 51 seats in Parliament, their battle for political control of the nation had only begun. They had to contend with the communist elements in their midst, and with a people who were highly attuned to the political scene.

The turning point for the PAP came when the Internal Security Council launched Operation Cold Store in February 1963, arresting 107 left-wing politicians and trade unionists. This haul included Lim Chin Siong, S. Woodhull, Fong Swee Suan, and Dominic Puthuchery who were all stalwarts of the Barisan Socialis – the party which posed the most fearsome challenge to the PAP then.

The crippling effects of this move could be seen in the September 1963 General Elections where the Barisan could only win 13 seats. The death knell for the Barisan came when after the September 1969 General Elections, 2 Internal Security operations further detained several of their leaders and deregistered the Barisan-controlled trade unions and rural organisations and hawkers unions.

From then on, the PAP never looked back. The measure of their strength came in the 1965 Hong Lim by-election. This was one of the strongest seats held by an opposition, and where the PAP managed to get only 33% of the votes in the September 1963 General Elections, they now won Hong Lim by 59% of the votes.

With the back of the communists broken, the PAP began to lay great emphasis on political stability in the interest of economic progress. Inevitably, a depoliticisation process was initiated, bringing about the pervasive sense of political poverty in Singapore today.

More than this, it has brought about a sense of complacency and the belief that "the government is doing all right so far. Let the government handle whatever problems that



....When the Barisan flag rode high.

may arise. I have my own problems to worry about."

There is also a growing acceptance, almost a worship, of taking what our leaders say to be gospel truth. One must be amused by the recent debate series over Singapore Broadcasting Corporation where pre-university students and even students from tertiary institutions quoted verbatim from Ministerial speeches and talks in the belief that just because a Minister or a leader says something, that makes it the truth.

The apparent philosophy underlying the policies and attitudes of the government has blended with the attitudes and orientations of the Singapore Chinese towards socio-

political variables such as authority, power, conflict which will affect functioning of the political system.

The emphasis is on benevolent government which provides visible goods — housing, jobs, economic opportunities, security, etc, and which demands compliance and allegiance in return.

Such a notion runs closely to the Confucian doctrine of family management. To the Singapore Chinese who has been reared in the Chinese cultural tradition, the State can become an extension of the Confucian family, and he is not really appalled by the authoritarianism in the political system — so long as the system takes care of his material needs.

The prevalence of such attitudes hold certain dangers. There is firstly the increasing monopolization of power in the hands of a few who, rightly or wrongly, may feel that only they have the correct answers to problems.

Such a feeling may in turn lead to a situation where faith and trust is placed solely on the judgement of expert consultants who may have their pet theories to prove. During this process, accurate and effective representation of the people who are experiencing that particular problem, may be impaired.

Secondly, whatever change there may be, can be, or should be, becomes the sole initiative of the leaders. Such a society is unlikely to produce much creativity or independent thought. While leaders should, and must lead, it does not mean that followers should merely follow.

Thirdly, the centralization of power in any one individual or body without adequate checking systems, raises the question of accountability, the Phey Yew Kok affair being a case in point. In the case of Phey, the Corrupt Practices Investigations Bureau served as a check. (See Issues Round-up). But how does one go about checking the abuses, if any, of government? A self checking

*....Manifestation of a desire for
Opposition?*



system can never be as effective or accurate as a responsible outside body.

Many have looked to an opposition force in Parliament as a solution to these questions.

Need for Opposition

In a parliamentary Debate on the Budget in March 1980, Mr. Fong Sip Chee, Member of Parliament for Chai Chee began his speech by saying that since the Whip was not lifted, he had no alternative but to support the government. He went on to say that he had to be very cautious with his remarks and would not attempt to go beyond the 'limits'.

These remarks contradict the basic principles of a Parliamentary system of government where free discussion and debate are supposed to take place before decisions are made. One recognises the importance and necessity of a Party Whip in any political party. But in such a situation where a single political party

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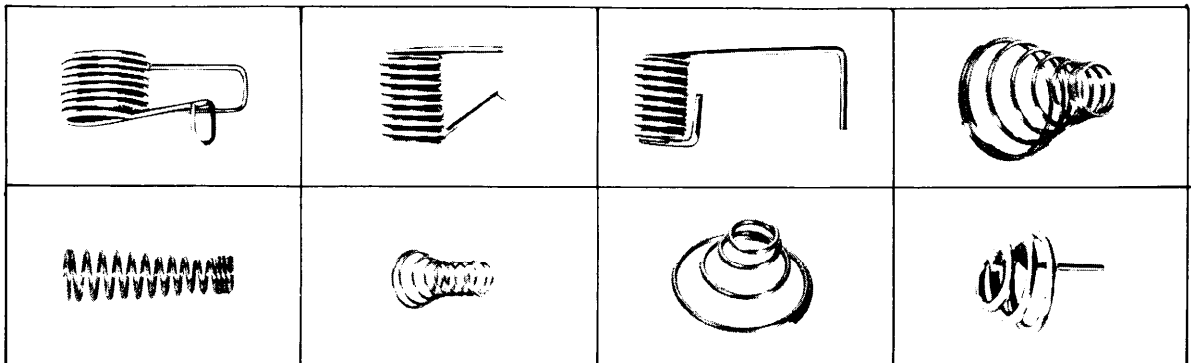
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....an Opposition party leader points out his party's platform.

occupies all Parliamentary seats, the Whip serves to emasculate the spirit behind a Parliamentary system of government. This alone would mean that the spirit of true Parliamentary government can work only where a minimum of 2 political parties occupy Parliamentary seats. Here one can be sure that discussion can probe the depths of programmes and ideas without reservation, and without necessarily weakening the fact of government.

Such a conception would of course call for an understanding of opposition and what it intends to generate. A responsible opposition does not oppose for the sake of opposing. Rather, it sustains free debate, spreads information and presses for a change of direction,

speed and style so that the manner and matter of government may improve. Its prime purpose is a continuous expression of public opinion to influence government with the view that government can be reformed and not necessarily destroyed. It therefore aims to broaden and improve public policies and practice where relevant attitudes and interests of significant groups are not being adequately considered. As one local political scientist puts it, ".....Opposition is a group of people able to mobilise, articulate and speak up for a group that has no voice. It's function is to press for quicker action."

Seen in this light, one can argue that it may not be necessary to have opposition parties sitting in Parliament or even for an Opposition party to exist in order to have the roles described here, worked out. Any interest group with a good enough cause, and with sufficient groundwork done, would be able to exert some form of influence on government.

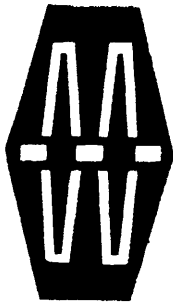
While this is true, what escapes scrutiny is the fact that putting an opposition force into Parliament legitimizes and strengthens the process of influencing government.

The desire for an opposition in Parliament can be gauged from the approximate 30% so-called 'protest' votes cast during the past 3 General Elections.

This is by no means a small figure, and whatever the reasons for it, in terms of proportion, it means that 30% of the voting population is without representation in Parliament. The same logic points out that the opposition should be holding 21 out of 69 seats in Parliament if there is to be proportionate representation.

The other point is that there are voters who may fancy a political party other than the PAP, but who do not have the opportunity to exercise their vote simply because there is no other candidate contesting in their constituency.

*Congratulations
& best wishes*



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*....Like a sage of old, an
Opposition leader mouths
his say.....*

Generally the quality, or lack of it, in the opposition gives the electorate little choice but to vote for the PAP which has at least been highly competent and sensible. It is however a sad reflection on our situation where one elects a party into power not because it is perceived as being good in itself, but because the others are seen as worse alternatives. How often have we heard the expressed need for the presence of an opposition in Parliament and the equally sad lament that no existing political party can fill this gap.

Whatever the incumbent party may say and however well they may say it, there is no denying that a responsible opposition in Parliament will at least give Singaporeans an alternative to the official version of things and a more accurate measure by which people can judge the efficacy of rulers and whether the truth is in them. It will serve to keep the incumbents on their toes, prevent them from taking things for granted, and act as a check to possible abuses of power among the high priests of our land.

However, it does not mean that these factors alone should persuade eligible citizens to give

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some seats to the opposition. The opposition parties must show credibility and some measure of sense before the electorate should trust them.

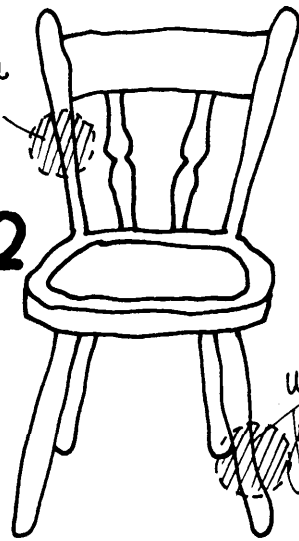
Strengthening Opposition

One of the strongest and most valid criticisms levelled against the opposition parties in Singapore is that they come to life only during election time. There have been claims by some parties that they are constantly repressed during normal times, that their applications for permits to print newsletters and to organise functions have been consistently rejected. Whatever the legitimacy of these claims, the fact remains that until and unless the opposition parties are able to develop programmes and engage in activities on regular basis between the election years, the electorate will be unable to shake off that faint suspicion that these parties may be political opportunists, that they may not be sincere, that.....and so on.



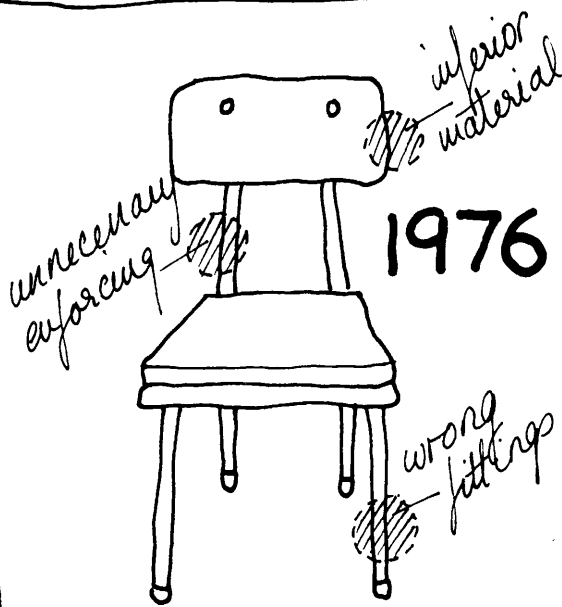
1968

causing back ache



1972

weak foundation



1976

unnecessary enforcing

1980 It's the same manufacturer again!



P.S. - BUT NOBODY COMPLAINS!

This is of course easier said than done. There is firstly the question of establishing a comprehensive and intelligent manifesto to which every core member of the party must subscribe in understanding, in spirit, and in practice. Such a manifesto is not developed overnight. It requires consistent study, serious thought, and much time. But it is a must for credibility.

Secondly, there is the question of finance. Few, if any, bodies in Singapore are willing to finance the activities of an opposition party. Party members themselves can only contribute so much. There must therefore be some priority placed on finding a way out of this situation. Alternatively, projects developed by the opposition should be designed to be self financing.

Thirdly, there is the question of access to information. One major function of opposition parties should be to closely monitor developments in Singapore on a consistent note, and to make comments on them — pointing out advantages, revealing flaws in logic, suggesting alternatives, exposing inaccurate information, etc. If such comments are to be intelligent, there must be primary data accessible, and from which the opposition parties can re-analyse figures if necessary, to check validity and accuracy and to suggest credible alternatives.

Fourthly, there is the problem of developing projects which will be relevant and useful to the people opposition parties hope to serve. Regularity and efficiency in such projects can do much to improve the tarnished image of opposition parties in Singapore.

Finally, the opposition parties must be able to attract people with character, integrity and intelligence and who are really committed to the cause of serving the people without thought of personally becoming beneficiaries in the process.

Voter Responsibility

What does voting mean to each of us personally? Are we voting on issues? What happens when we agree with a political party on a particular issue and disagree with it on another? Are we voting for the Party? What if the particular candidate put up by the Party is far from desirable or effective as a Member of Parliament? Are we voting for individual personalities? What if that individual is a member of a political party unacceptable to us?

When we elect a Party, are we endorsing particular measures suggested or adopted? Or should we be evaluating integrity, wisdom, judgement and resolution? Again do we see the need for some form of political competition because, as in economic principles, competition brings out the best in a system?

DUTIES OF A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

My first duty is to the people who have placed their faith and trust in me that I am best able to represent their interests and views.

I have also a duty to my nation. In any instance when the interests of my constituents conflict with that of my nation's, I have the responsibility to conscientiously examine the facts of the case and to fully satisfy myself that my nation's interests as defined are objectively for national good.

I have then the duty of translating this awareness to my constituents, of ensuring that there is recognition of the sacrifices they may be called upon to make and of ensuring adequate compensation for them in other possible ways.

Where I believe that "national good" has been used as an instrument of oppression, or as a tool for the furtherance of one group's interests, I have the duty to actively campaign against it, to expose it for what it is, — even at the risk of antagonising my government and my party.

I have the duty of keeping up with all significant events and policies, and of deliberating over them with my constituents so that I am informed and best able to represent their views and interests.

I have the duty of ensuring that feedback from my constituents are genuine and representative of the majority, and I will constantly involve myself with the ground to bring this about.



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....and I ask you, what kind of democracy is there.....

These are questions that must run through the responsible voter's mind everytime he goes to the polls.

Conclusion

The size of our nation, the vulnerability of our economy and the scarcity of our natural resources, — all these render us helpless in the face of global forces too large and powerful for us to tackle. To survive, we must pull together and move together. Our history is evidence enough of this.

Over the years, our people have become more sophisticated and better educated. Surely even as we pull together, there should be some room given for manoeuvre, some room for creativity and discussion? For ultimately the test of good government is not just survival, but also the realization of human potential and the fulfilment of this spirit of enquiry.

B

WHAT I WILL

NOT

DO

1. I will not treat my Meet-the-People sessions as an unpleasant but necessary task to be done.
2. I will not assume that people cannot solve their own problems, and that I am the Know-All with large doses of advice and mini-lectures.
3. I will not just appear at official functions with my plastic smile and not be found the rest of the time when my constituents need me.
4. I will not close my doors to any one be he a criminal or a pauper.
5. I will not be influenced in my decisions by thoughts of fame and power, or by flattery and 'yes-men'.
6. I will not blindly ape mindless campaigns initiated by people no matter how well-intentioned they may be.
7. I will not blindly shove policies down to people just because my party or government feels it should be so.
8. I will not be a 'Yes-man' in Parliament even for the sake of expediency.

Why does the opposition candidate here make such a fool of himself? I want to vote for an opposition because that is important as a check to government. But I can't vote this fool in. It's illogical. Hmmm..... better the devil I know.....

The PAP is bound to be the next government. If my MP is a PAP man, maybe I can get my HDB flat faster. Perhaps Ah Mui can even get a hawkers licence..... Besides, I don't want any trouble from the government, and Sum Koo's son did say that it is possible to find out who you voted for.

Thoughts

some

Four years! I did not see him for four years and now he comes around telling me how much the PAP has done for us in the past and to vote for him just because he represents PAP. Well, the PAP may have done much for the country, but he certainly has not done anything for me.. But that is true of the opposition candidate too.....I can't vote for any one of them without feeling insincere. I have to vote anyway or else I will be struck off the register. I know..... I will spoil my vote.

Polling Day. An important day. Who should I vote for? The PAP has done much for the country. But why did they have to put such a high-powered candidate in my constituency? If he is elected, will I get a chance to see him? He may be made a Minister or an Ambassador to another country. I don't want to elect someone whom I probably won't see till the next elections. After all, a Member of Parliament is supposed to serve and represent the residents of his constituency. I don't want to go and see a representative of my representative about my problems.

The opposition has a point. There's too much autocracy, too little consultation with the people before policies are pushed through. We are ready for an opposition in Parliament, after all we are better educated, more sophisticated and equipped to deal rationally with problems now. Why don't the government give us a chance to participate in policy formulation? An opposition in Parliament may be the only way now.....

of

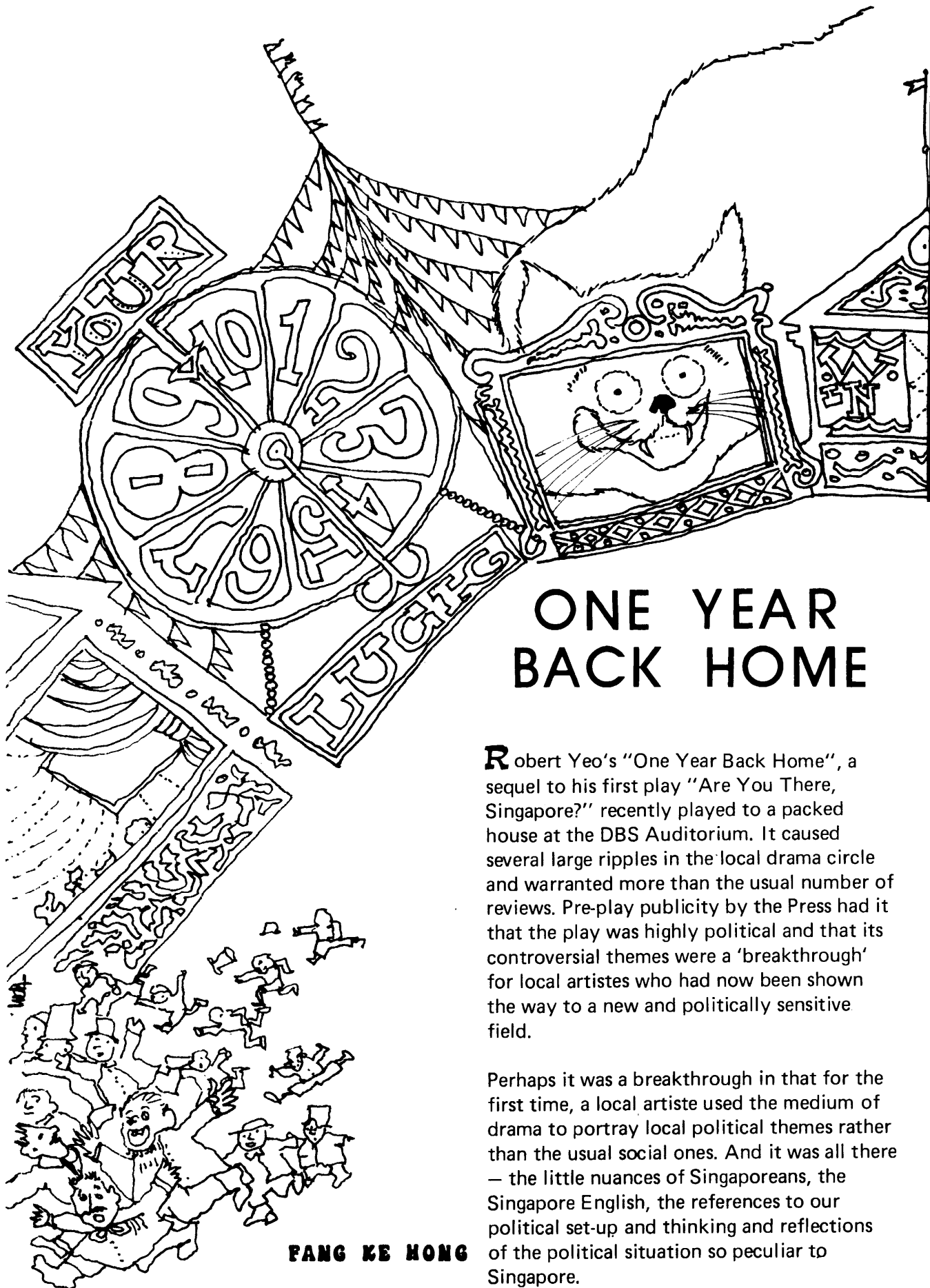
Voters

December 23rd. Polling day. Fantastic!! I think I will wake up early tomorrow and try put in my vote before 9a.m. That will leave me with the whole day free, and maybe Kim Seng will be available for the 11 o'clock show. Then we can run down to Marine Parade in the evening..... Now where's that Polling Card of mine? Who's running for the constituency anyway.....?

Why all this farce? Why don't we forget about elections and just give the PAP a blank cheque? That's what we have been doing all these years. Perhaps we can save everyone's time and effort.

Heck! Why am I always left out? Last elections the constituency was contested by an opposition candidate whom I would gladly vote for, but I was too young. This time I am eligible to vote, but there's no opposition candidate. Who is going to listen to my views? When will I get a chance to have my say?

B



ONE YEAR BACK HOME

Robert Yeo's "One Year Back Home", a sequel to his first play "Are You There, Singapore?" recently played to a packed house at the DBS Auditorium. It caused several large ripples in the local drama circle and warranted more than the usual number of reviews. Pre-play publicity by the Press had it that the play was highly political and that its controversial themes were a 'breakthrough' for local artistes who had now been shown the way to a new and politically sensitive field.

Perhaps it was a breakthrough in that for the first time, a local artiste used the medium of drama to portray local political themes rather than the usual social ones. And it was all there — the little nuances of Singaporeans, the Singapore English, the references to our political set-up and thinking and reflections of the political situation so peculiar to Singapore.

FANG KE HONG



But after the first wave of excitement at our very own 'political' play subsided, closer examination revealed that nothing controversial or politically new was really said. And it is not really surprising though the producer believed otherwise, that the Ministry of Culture had let the play through.

What Yeo has done is to pick up the existing arguments of opposition parties and pitched them against the seemingly impeccable logic and reason of the ruling party. And of course, the arguments of the ruling party are often made to prevail. What further irritates is Yeo's casting of Fernandez as the typical example of opposition party members, and his portrayal of Fernandez as a naive, long-haired, brand-conscious radical. In so doing, he has tarred all opposition members and inadvertently, would-be opposition members with the same brush.

Yeo has grasped the tenure of the Opposition's arguments in most cases though he does not develop upon it. This is a pity since the opposition parties themselves seem unable to develop their own arguments further though there may be some merit to them. There is for example the scene when Chye stated that MPs were elected on their record and Fernandez

fiercely asked what record Chye possessed. Chye's reply that he had a basic desire to serve should have been examined closer because it seems to imply that only PAP candidates have this basic desire to serve.

I felt other themes important to the creation of political awareness were brought up, but only fleetingly touched upon for example, the statement made by Fernandez on the polarization of politics in Singapore where, if you are not for the PAP, you are against it. Another haunting question left unanswered was Fernandez's "Has being in Singapore sapped him of his idealism?" and his almost cynical comment that while Chye and him were in London, they were "..... only students then, and talking."

Yeo's play, to a great extent, reflects the reality of Singapore's political situation where Opposition parties are generally weak and ineffectual. But he is not saying anything very controversial or dangerous. Neither is he really taking a stand as to what kind of political situation we should have.

If there is at all a stand, it is a politically 'correct' one which views the present system as the best possible under existing circumstances. The classical example of this belief comes towards the end of the last scene when Gerald Tan, Hua's lover was convinced to stay in Singapore and work for the PAP. All of which goes to reinforce the feeling that the whole play is but another monument to the PAP's achievements.

As an attempt to dramatise the political situation in Singapore, Yeo's play is both delightful in its humour and refreshing in its content. But as a really serious political commentary aimed at stimulating thought and discussion on politics in Singapore, it can hardly be said to have succeeded.



THE WAY WE ARE

..... is often, in very large measure, the result of our social environment. Our family, our friends, the 'significant others,' in our lives, the wider society, shaped and moulded us. In this section, we bring you encounters from everyday life that makes us 'the way we are.'

WHAT FOR?

CHAN WAI HAN

Two friends, Smugness and Altruism, were carrying on a conversation at a coffee-house.

Altruism: Hey, Smug, haven't seen you for such a long time, I'm glad we can have dinner together.

Smugness: Yes, my good friend. If we hadn't bumped into each other just now, I guess we would never have arranged to meet.

Altruism: You certainly seem to have come a long way since our roti-prata days at the old coffee shop. Boy, this is really quite a posh place.

Smugness: Well, I always believe that we should at least eat in comfort, if nothing else. Those hot, stuffy days at roadside stalls and dingy coffee-shops are behind me now.

Altruism: But don't you think that you can spend your money in some other ways.....

Smugness: Oh, I know, you mean something like giving to charity. Well, I'm already doing that. Every Saturday, I'm accosted without fail by at least one of those people selling flags for one charity or another. There are so many of these things I don't even bother to

find out whom I'm giving to. I usually give to the first one I meet. Luckily they have to give me a flag so that I can show it to the others who ask me to donate. Hey, hey! I usually give them the first coin I can find – sometimes when they're lucky, I'll come up with a fifty-cent coin.

Altruism: But, Smug, I'm sure you can easily afford to give a dollar or two.

Smugness: What for? I don't know how those people are going to use my money. For all you know, considering all the recent cases of CBT, you know, so-called responsible officials who run away with public funds, it may be better not to give anything at all.

Altruism: Maybe you shouldn't let one or two incidents colour your views altogether. Most of the welfare bodies are really doing a good job, and they certainly need every cent they can get.

Smugness: Oh, Al, you're still so naive and trusting. Anyway, who's looking after my welfare? I should be saving every cent I have for my family. I think I'm giving my fair share to society simply by taking good care of myself and my family. At least, we're not a burden to others.

Altruism: Yes, that's what most people seem to think.....

Smugness: I'm sure we're right. On top of that, I pay my income tax faithfully, something which a lot of filthy rich towkays can't claim to have done.

Altruism: Yeah, it just doesn't seem fair that those who are well-off seem to be getting even richer, whereas those who give their blood, sweat and toil never seem to earn enough to live comfortably. I always think of the dustman, the roadsweeper. His is truly one of the most thankless tasks on earth. Imagine having to cart those tonnes of rubbish, facing the dirt and stench, day in day out. He earns barely enough to feed his wife and kids. More often than not, his wife will have to work as a washerwoman to supplement the family income.

Smugness: What do you expect? You certainly aren't suggesting that we follow some Western countries' example, where a dustman can possibly earn more than a Ph.D. That would really be preposterous!

Altruism: I'm not saying that exactly. But consider this: Say, the Ph. D. is a lecturer, he sits in air-con comfort; his job is stimulating and rewarding as he can interact with his students and fellow academics. On top of that, he has the prestige accorded to a learned man. On the other hand, as I had just said, the dustman has to work under intolerable conditions: rain or shine, he has to clear the rubbish, otherwise some health conscious executive will write to the press and complain.



THE WAY WE ARE

Smugness: Don't be a dreamer, Al. Our society has been always like this. Those doing menial work, the servants, drivers, peons, etc. should be paid less than the mechanics, technicians, administrators, etc — you know, the people who have to use their brain power. The menial workers — they don't need any special education, they simply use their brute strength. Whereas, the people of real economic value, like the computer scientist, systems analyst — they really make sacrifices, slogging through all those years at their studies.....

Altruism: You say "slogging.....at their studies". But why? There must be something terribly wrong. Studying is supposed to be a privilege, the joy of discovery and learning new things. Why is it seen as a chore, to be compensated by good pay, comfort and luxury after one has cleared the hurdles?

Smugness: Simply because these people contribute more to society — they have higher

economic value. If you are suggesting that everyone should be paid equally or that everyone should get only what he needs, then the system will definitely fail. There will not be any incentive for anyone to work hard!

Altruism: (Angrily) That's it! That's exactly what's wrong. People are brought up to think that the measure of worth is how much one can earn, how large a car one drives, whether one can afford a private apartment..... Can't we ever break out of this vicious cycle of selfishness?

Smugness: What selfishness? What else should one live for? Come on, Al. Let me give you the best advice. In this world, nobody owes anybody a living. If you can't take care of yourself, nobody is going to help you. The Three Musketeers said, "All for one, and one for all!" Well, I say, "All for one, and one for himself!"

Altruism: Oh, Smug!

B

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THE WAY WE ARE

We have featured the following letter from a reader here because we felt that the points and observations made rightly belong to "The Way We Are" column as it certainly reflects the thoughts of a fair section of our population. However, publication of the letter does not mean that we support his philosophy.

The writer believes that the individual is caught up in his own struggle for material well-being, and that this is a cycle which does not stop. What Breakthrough wants to get across to people is that they can stop the cycle, if they so wish. Breakthrough remains sceptical about the accuracy of the writer's last statement that the end of economic policy is always social policy because the tendency is that economic policy often becomes an end in itself.

Dear Sir,

What makes the "Breakthrough" team so distinctive is its ideals in a "hostile" environment which emphasizes materialism.

It is awesome to note that there is but a handful of you in a sea of people whose primary concern is but their personal well-being. Too much of our time is spent in bickering with others, in being covetous and envious.

And the sad fact is that we keep denying our shortcomings unceasingly. There is a dire need to show love, to give a thought to those around us, to spread goodwill. But sadly, how unpractised we are in these.

The detached Singaporean is however here to stay. Who are they? Basically there are two categories. One comprises the lower middle class and above. They are participating in Life's great struggles – to become financially and socially secured. They really have no time to be informed and involved in the well-being of the community and nation. They are totally immersed and preoccupied with their jobs. In their leisure they do not wish to be involved in the agony of decision-making which they must if they join Breakthrough or any of the welfare or community organisations.

The second category of the detached Singaporeans is the lower classes of society. Poverty here becomes the focus. To make

THE WAY WE ARE

ends meet, to earn enough to send their children to school becomes the concern. There is no time to participate actively in the community.

Well, then there is no apparent difference between the two categories – they are both caught in the web of economic survival in a society that is encouraging them to be so.

Singapore is a young nation with all spheres of its economy in infant stages. It is metamorphosing very rapidly into a matured developed society. In that process the “social element” of life is sacrificed. At best it is artificially inseminated or grafted into the structural fabric of society as seen from the proliferation of government or institutionally inspired social organisations such as the RCs, MCs, CCs, national campaigns, etc.

These artificial inseminations to inculcate social concern in a growing economic machinery may not work because our ethos is one that is persistently stressing economic superiority as a nation, as a family, and as an individual.

Our guilty conscience is indicated by our uproar when someone calls us “Ugly Singaporeans”. The general chorus to deny it by our ministers, middle-class citizens, office workers, students is somewhat baffling. Why not instead turn around and ask ourselves how the label originates?

In the midst of these, there are always people like yourselves and the volunteers who set up welfare programmes on their own initiative (as opposed to institutionally inspired programmes). But there is a minority of you. And it makes us and perhaps yourselves wonder sometimes if you are social outcasts.

It should also make you wonder sometimes why you are not doing something to enhance your material well-being instead.

What you receive in support are mostly just nods and pats on your back. There is little energy left in us to lift our hands to help you achieve the society you are after. We are tired after a hard day’s work and need to rest and keep to ourselves for moments of solitude. We want to get a good job, a wife, wait for our HDB flats, hope for some kids, and pray God I have a car.

How long will the fire of concern burn? On our part we give our verbal support – you are all simply marvellous to see the blossoming of an idea conceived during your school days years ago.

Not very encouraging on our part to be just adding oral support, right? Not to worry, it is the very guts to dare to be different and to work for it that makes for greater things to come. Rest assured that if you persevere you will be able to look back later and say that if you have to go through it again, you will!

For us we take the easier way out and feel very guilty about it. But there is always the rationale that we as a nation will turn up just fine in years to come. What we are going through as a nation and as a community is but part of a growing-up process with obstacles, different views and priorities, different ways of achieving similar goals all strewn along the way. Deep in us we are not ugly. We are only ugly under the present circumstances. Do not forget – the end of economic policy is always social policy!

Arthur Tan
Singapore

B

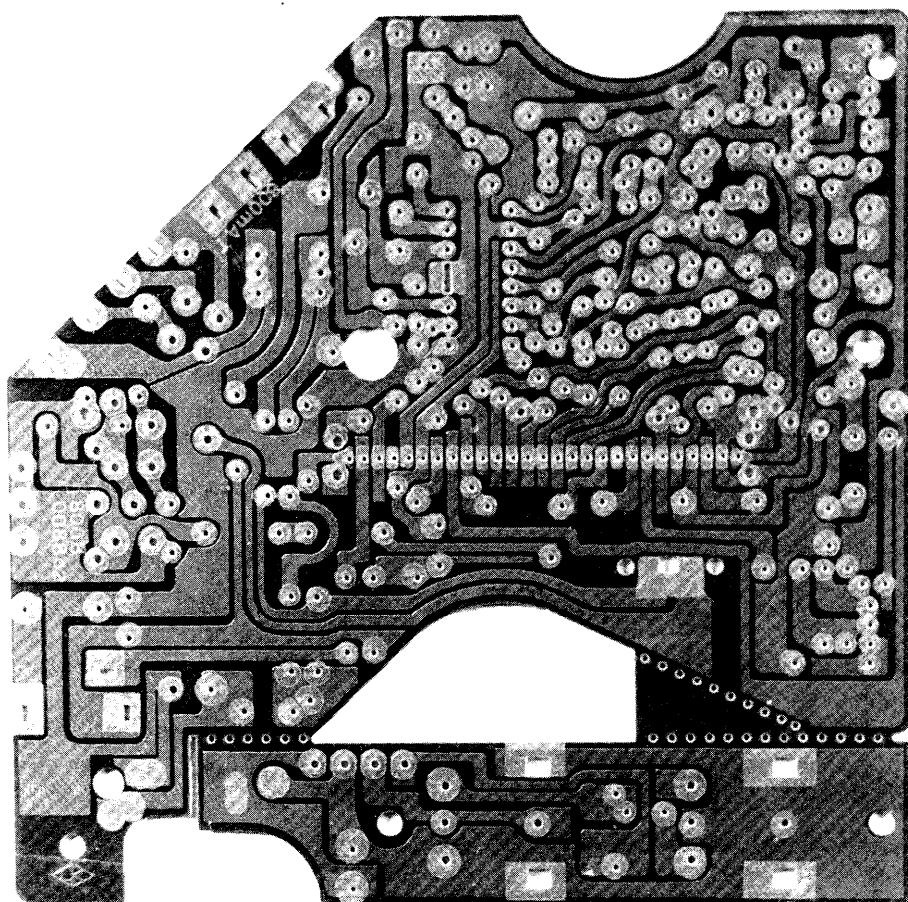
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weeps -

SIDE A •

It's no game (Part 1).
Up the hill backwards
scary monsters
(and super creeps).
Ashes to ashes.
Fashion.

— SIDE B •

Teenage Wildlife
scream like a baby.
Kingdom come.
Because you're young.
It's no game (Part 2).

super

1 2 3 4

David Bowie

scary

SNOWDOWN

Philip Cheah

Tomorrow belongs to those who can hear it coming.
(RCA advertisement promoting 'Heroes' – 1978)

How come you only want tomorrow
with its promise of something hard to do?
(Teenage Wildlife – Bowie 1980)

I'm tired, you're tired, we're all tired. Every-day we wake up and worry about tomorrow – the war in Kampuchea, the starving millions of refugees and the countless, endless problems of petty humans who suffer their existence in this world.

So why not take David Bowie's advice? Forget about them. Leave it to the heroes who will champion lost causes, who dream impossible dreams and scream like babies about rights and freedom. Maybe they're all going up the hill backwards.

His message is that we should be what we are and nothing more. To be more would lead to trouble. It will frustrate you.

Isn't that true? When you're young, you're

idealistic. War is seen to be wrong, guns kill and colours don't matter. Ahh.....youth!
"Because you're young – a million dreams, a million scars."

Ten years ago when Bowie first started his career he was an idealist. Songs like "London Bays", "Space Oddity", "Changes" and "Oh You Pretty Thing" were all about a better world to come.

By 1973 he was already a superstar and here began his dive into decadence, drugs, sex and rock and roll. All the excess of superstardom was practised and it left him empty.

He then began his search for meaning and this produced two albums, "Young Americans" and "Station To Station". Bowie then plunged into a period of introspection and alienation and produced "Low" in 1977. His search brought him to West Germany and Japan, two countries similar to Singapore in that they are well organised societies. It was in West Germany that his best album, "Heroes" was made.

Bowie's new surroundings made him reflect upon the problems in Britain and he made a public statement calling for a better organised society. This got the critics out against him. They accused him of being a fascist.

Today at 33, Bowie has lived a life full of experience and it seems that he is tired of idealists and opinion makers. The revolution has passed him by.

The case for David Bowie lies in the 10 songs that grace this album. The first song, "It's No Game" (Part One) is a duet between Michi Hirota, who sings in Japanese, and Bowie. It's a song about violence and how insane it all is. Nobody cares about refugees.

"Documentaries on refugees.....Put a bullet in my brain/And it makes all the papers/.....So where's the moral?"

It's also about the high cost of idealism. To preach revolution is no game because people who follow often get hurt.

"Silhouettes and shadows watch the revolution/No more free steps to heaven."

The suckers in a war are not the leaders but

the people who fight it.

The song is frightening because of the anguished manner in which it is sung. It closes with a frustrated Bowie refusing to listen anymore and shouting, "Shut Up".

Quite a few critics have accused him of not making meaningful albums, of neglecting the impetus of rock and becoming complacent. This is Bowie's reply that it's no game being an opinion maker and the responsibilities are heavy. Bowie castigates those who think that problems can be solved so easily and refuses to be pressured by peer group influence to toe the line.

"Up The Hill Backwards" back up Michel's **"Iron Law Of Oligarchy"** that people must always be ruled by elites. The people's revolution is a sham.

"The vacuum created by the arrival of freedom/And the possibilities it seems to offer/It's got nothing to do with you/If one can grasp it."

The next song **"Scary Monsters"** attacks the superstar who thinks the world of himself and

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MUSIC

forgets that it's the fans who support him. The need for hero worship is put down as a wasted effort.

"Ashes To Ashes" comes up next and it's the obvious single with its catchy melody and spacy feel. Nothing abstract here as on the rest of the album, it's about his one time affair with drugs.

"Time and time I tell myself / I'll stay clean tonight / But the little green wheels are following me / Oh no, not again / I'm stuck with a valuable friend."

Being a slave to drugs

Being a slave to drug is an even greater evil than being a slave to idealism. There is also a reference to Bowie's **"Space Oddity"**, a hit of 10 years ago, presumably written when he was under the influence.

"My mama said to get things done / You better not mess with Major Tom."



"Fashion" a disco song closes side one. It's all about foolish people who follow fashion like robots. Beep beep.

"Teenage Wildlife" opens side two with a reminder of 1967's big hit, **"Heroes"**. It has references to new wave and the critics who accused him of lacking commitment.

"One of the new wave boys / Same old thing in brand new drag" is exactly how Bowie feels about new wave music. He has previously said that the new rock acts are losing their individual identity by climbing aboard the new wave bandwagon.

"I'm not some piece of teenage wildlife."

"Scream like A Baby" is about Sam, a young man who believed in peace, love and the brotherhood of man. In the song he gets arrested, beaten up and ends up a wasted junkie. Like a baby your screams produce no results.

"Scream like a baby / Sam was a gun / But I never knew his last name / And we never had no fun."

The romantic notion of revolution is exposed and shown to be what it really is — hard work.



Verlaine's **"Kingdom Come"** is about knocking your head on a brick wall and expecting it to come crumbling down.

"Because you're Young" is the only love song on the album. Pete Townshend plays some tasteful lead guitar at the intro. It's about the innocence and enthusiasm of youth. Full of high hopes to change the world for the better

but reality comes crashing in when they discover that even in the simplest of human relations – Love – they can go wrong. What more the complexities of government, morality, the economy and the struggle for peace?

"Because you're young / What could be nicer for you /A million dreams / A million scars."

The last song is **"It's No Game (Part Two)"**, This time it's sung by Bowie alone. His voice is distant, like an unconcerned observer, a TV announcer who reads the news but isn't interested in it.

This is what 10 years has done to Bowie. No longer is he an idealist or decadent superstar or depressed person. He is now merely a performer performing, an actor acting but no longer feeling for the part he plays. Maybe that's why he's dressed up like a clown on the cover.

Though the album has a negative atmosphere for its eschews idealism, hero-worship and bondage to fads and fashion, it is also a positive album.

It calls for a return to individualism. For too long have people not been able to define for

themselves their own needs. They have been bombarded into role playing by adverts, television, newspapers, fashion, religion and sexual stereotyping, each claiming a part or all of the individual's time. Yes, it is scary when you think about it.

You drink Coca Cola or Seven Up because the adverts have submerged these two brands deep into your subconsciousness. They come automatically into your mind. This is not to say that you don't like it but that the glitter of propaganda when repeated often enough can blind you from making your own judgement. Socialization makes you do things not because you sincerely want to but because it's there.

If anything, this album has allowed the listener another opinion. Bowie doesn't force you to accept, he can't. He invites you to listen and think for yourself.

So how come you want tomorrow with its promise of something hard to do? Live for today.

"Don't follow leaders, watch your parking meters."
(Subterranean Homesick Blues – Bob Dylan 1965)

B



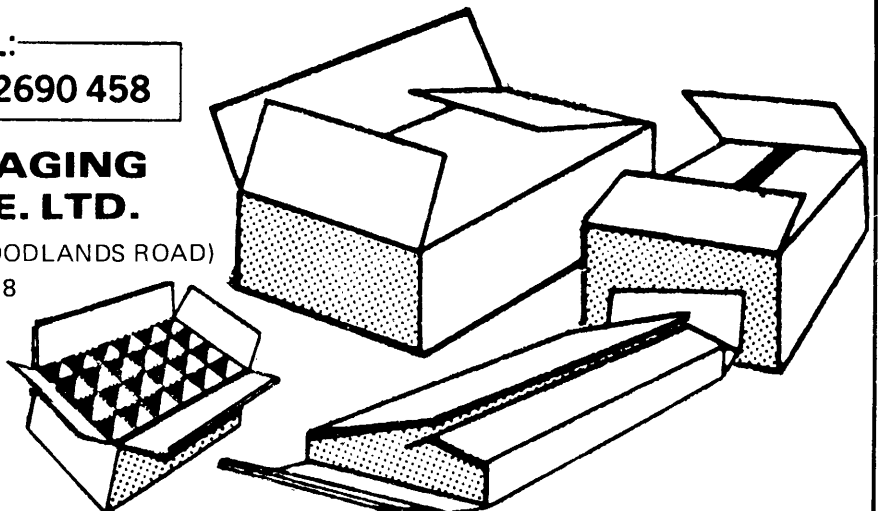
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SHORT STORY

OH! BETH!



palmer

The other night I thought she came back. But when I pulled aside the curtains and looked out into the howling night, I heard only the creaking of the trees as they bowed to the whistling wind, and saw only the silently moving shadows of the ominous clouds that scuttled across the menacing sky. As I turned away from the window, the painful throb in my heart grew with dawning acceptance of the fact that she would never return. Her faith in Humanity had been shattered when the one person she loved most in the world betrayed her.

It's been one year now, and she still hasn't forgiven me. I wonder if she still remembers the happy times we spent on our moonlight walks. Our love has been nurtured and founded on those lovely walks. We used to go home, ruffled and dirty. It was during one of these walks when I tripped and cut my forehead, and she came running up and nursed me till the blood stopped flowing. When Mother died, she had sat under that Casuarina tree with me while I wept untold tears on her head. She was always there to console me in

my time of need and sorrow. I had used her, time and again as a supporting crutch, and in the end I had betrayed her! Beth! Oh Beth! You have always been so kind and good to me. Will you not try to forgive the failings of human nature?

I will always remember the day she left, her once faithful eyes dark with reproach and accusation. She had walked out of the door and out of my life. I did not have the courage to call her back. Even if I did try, I don't think she would have turned back.

I can still remember the fear which came over me when I broke the vase which was Mother's last birthday gift to Dad, and the impulsive reaction as I laid the blame on Beth when Dad questioned us. I still hear the swishing of the cane and the dull 'fla-at!' as it landed on Beth's poor body. She received the worst thrashing of her life. But she had borne her punishment in silence. Her love for me would not permit the truth. When I still refused to explain to Dad, she left home.

I don't know where she is, or what she is doing now. But her absence has been punishment enough for me. I cannot bear to think of her, wandering along the deserted streets, or in the hands of a man who may ill treat her. For all I know, she may be just a heap of bones by the roadside, unknown, unwanted.

Somehow I cannot imagine her lying in the dust, or suffering the agonies of the damned. Probably she is with another man now, her generous love, courage and loyalty bringing happiness to him.

Beth, can't you come back to me one more time so that I can ask for forgiveness? At least give me the chance to say what I never said before,----that your canine form belies the humanness of your friendship. **B**

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Crisis Centre

A year ago when BREAKTHROUGH first hit the streets, the question on many minds was "After social awareness, then what?" The feeling was that BREAKTHROUGH as a magazine could only bring about social awareness, and even then, chances were that awareness would have been there in the first place. Period.

However the BREAKTHROUGH team felt that a logical followup to the magazine would be to harness the awareness so created, and we challenged readers to step forth to do their bit.

In August 1980, a group of BREAKTHROUGH team members and some concerned readers came together to see if they could translate their awareness into some concrete projects.

This group of people then formed the Pioneers Club which was registered with the Registry of Societies. The objectives of the Pioneers Club are:

- a) To offer an opportunity for individuals to engage in meaningful and constructive activities and in the process accentuate their self-development.
- b) To inculcate social awareness and concern so as to bring about a more caring community.
- c) To promote the well-being of members.

After much discussion, the Club decided to take on their first project — establishing a CRISIS CENTRE. This Centre aims to:

- a) Provide temporary shelter for someone facing a crisis and requiring accommodation away from their own home; and

- b) Offer counselling or referral service to help the person overcome this period of crisis.

As a start to implementing this project, the Pioneers Club will be running an Orientation Training Course for people who may wish to become volunteer workers at the Centre. We feel that volunteers for the Centre must be equipped with the basic skills to handle crisis situations.

The Course covers subjects like Crisis Situations, Basic Counselling Skills, Crisis intervention, Self-Awareness and Motivation, The Art of Communication and Listening, etc. Training is conducted by professional social workers and counsellors from the Samaritans of Singapore and the Counselling and Care Centre.

The Crisis Centre is presently 'borrowing' the premises of a Social Service Centre in Geylang and will be using that Centre as a home base. Actual operation of the Crisis Centre is scheduled to take place in June 1981.

Financing of the project is not anticipated to be too much of a problem as a large part of the operating cost (i.e. rental of a place) has been absorbed by the Social Service Centre whose director strongly supports the idea of a Crisis Centre. He has thus permitted the Club to use the Social Service Centre without charge.

Readers who may be interested to know more about the Crisis Centre and The Pioneers Club can write to:

*LKF Publishers
Ang Mo Kio West
P O Box 357
Singapore 9156*

B



I SAW YOU THERE

*They pumped their tire
Across your land,
I see the destruction
On your faces still.*

*You walk, and walk, and walk
From hell, through hell,
And to further hell.
And roaring above your heads,
Noise loud as star-clashes,
Exchange of mortar for mortar,
You are paper-bullets
Frightened toys of
Giant children, cruel in play.*

*Sad, sad fragments of
Peaceful farmlife
Rich with fat buffaloes,
Warm-skinned children
And full ricebowls.
Professionals,
Child-soldiers,
Peasants,
Strange butterflies,
Emerging from cocoon-warmth-safety
Into trigger-happy world.*

*I am not acquainted with your grief
I cannot begin to recognise your faces,
I think my soul*

*Apprehends your blitzed souls, your screams,
But I am complete still
And my mouth opens like a fool's
Mutely, mutely,
Forgive me,
I am not worthy to weep with you.*

Lee Siew Hua

B



You are not

Have you ever been in a crowd and felt alone?
Alone in your hopes and dreams for a better Society
and a more caring world? Have you ever tried to fight the
system and failed because you were one and they were many?
Or did you not try because you felt that an individual is only a
digit in the system and cannot bring about change?

alone

We were like that once. Then BREAKTHROUGH came along, and
as you can see from our artists' observations on the left, we are still a
crowd, — but now we are no longer alone.

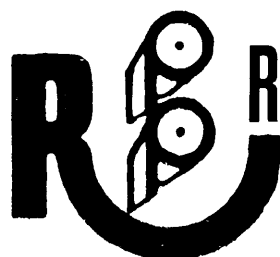
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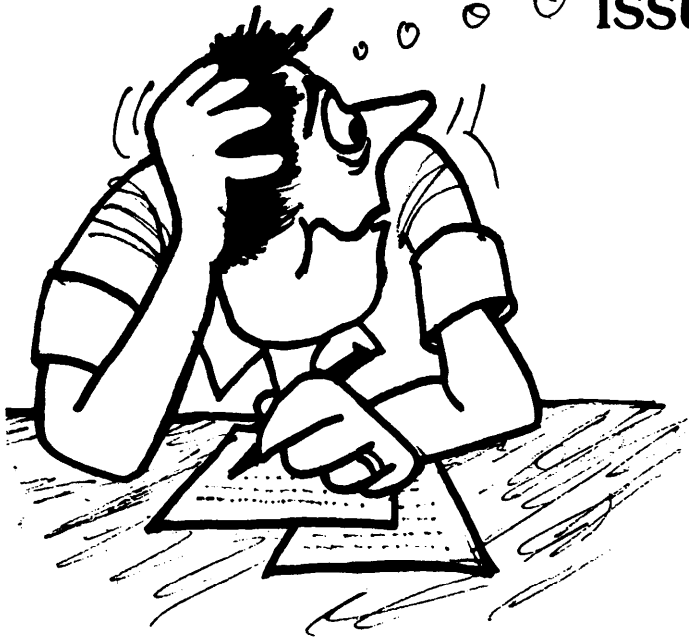
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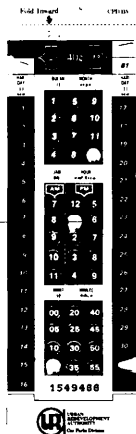


A case for CASE

The coupon parking system is here to stay. There is absolutely no use for anyone to still moan about the inconveniences, unfair fines, clock-watching and so on. Since the system was first introduced in February '80 by the Urban Redevelopment Authority, its success had prompted the Housing and Development Board to follow suit in November and implement the system in 12 HDB estates.

The more important issue perhaps, is to look at the method of implementation of the whole system. It was by administrative fiat that the system was introduced. But fortunately, the bureaucracy was not so inflexible as to disregard all cries of

protest after the initial implementation. For example, a number of motorists complained that they may not have a working pen to mark off the squares & circles on the coupon; the URA then changed their coupons to the type with peel-off tabs.



The HDB conveniently followed the URA's example and straightaway started their exercise with the peel-off type of coupons. Furthermore, now there are

coupons of higher denominations to cater for those motorists who need to park for long stretches. These changes are a result of the feedback received from the car park users and they reflect a healthy regard for public opinion by the bureaucrats.

Perhaps what needs to be done now is for the authorities to continue monitoring the system to make things more convenient for the hapless motorists. For one thing, the booklets of coupons could be made available at several more places other than the URA and HDB offices and some post-offices. If these booklets could be bought at any bookstores and shops, then the motorist will never need to worry about running out of supply at crucial times.

Considering that the sale of these coupons represents advance income to the



Fold Inward ↓

		HOUSING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD			
Ven No	Time	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1981					
1	9	17	25		
2	10	18	26		
A.M. P.M.					
3	11	19	27		
4	12	5		4	12
5	1	6		5	13
6	2			6	22
7	3	8		7	15
8	4	9		8	16
9	5				
10	20	40		1	4
11	25			2	5
12	30	50		3	6
13	35	55		4	9

40 C A0818089

children attending pre-primary and primary one classes will have to answer to their names in Hanyu Pinyin (a romanised form of Chinese phonetics). However, their statutory names will continue to appear in class registers.

This policy appears to be a logical follow-up to the various activities and programmes supporting the year-old 'Speak Mandarin' campaign. There has been an increase in Mandarin programmes over radio and television. Mandarin classes have mushroomed at community centres, government departments, statutory boards, etc. Thus, spelling Chinese names in Hanyu Pinyin is but another attempt to popularise Mandarin.

At a glance, it seems that the child will benefit since he will be addressed identically in both languages. Primary One student Tan Boon Tah will simply be known as Chen Wen Da to both his English and Chinese language teachers (assuming that his English teachers will be able to master the Pinyin system).

However, trouble comes if Wen Da has learned in his pre-primary class to answer to the name "Boon Tah". Further trouble comes if Chen Wen Da's elder brother in the same school is Tan Boon Chin. Wen Da may be confused as to why he does not share the same

stances beyond their control. These people will only be too glad to pay the necessary charges. So why should they be so heavily penalised?

Of course, the argument from the authorities' point of view is that the motorist should err on the side of generosity and display more than the sufficient number of coupons. This step will further fatten the coffers of the URA/HDB while the poor motorist will have paid for a parking space which he had not used. Perhaps CASE could look into this profiteering?

chan wai han

The Naming Game

The Ministry of Education has decided that with effect from January 1981, Chinese

URA/HDB, car park users should not be penalised for not having easy access to these strips of paper which will save them from having to pay \$20 fines.

Talking about \$20 fines, this is another sore point with the long-suffering motorist. Why can't he pay up for the time for which he had parked in excess, rather than pay such a hefty amount — hefty in relation to the 40 cents per hour parking at HDB car parks, or at most 50 cents per half-hour parking at CDB car parking zones. The intent of such a heavy fine may be to deter scoundrelly motorists from trying to cheat the URA/HDB of their lawful dues. But there are many honest car park users who may have simply miscalculated the parking time required, or who have been held up by circum-

surname as his brother and his father. Adding to the confusion in his young mind is this question: why is his teacher Mrs Tan not addressed as Mrs Chen?

One may argue that the actual Chinese characters in the name have not been changed at all. It is only the English transliteration that has been standardized. However, the surname of a person is a matter of his family pride and glory. No one should be forced to change even the English transliteration of his Chinese name if he does not wish to do so.

This is really the crux of the issue. Why should the Ministry of Education take such arbitrary action? Parents should be given the choice to have their children's names registered in whichever way they want. One can't help but harbour some resentment towards such bureaucratic autocracy.

On the other hand, the Ministry should encourage schools to discuss with parents the importance of having a homogeneous Chinese language for the Chinese. This will no doubt take time and effort, but it will be worthwhile if parents are truly convinced of the significance of the whole exercise. They may then co-operate willingly to help create a Mandarin speaking environment for their children in the home.

Far too often, changes in school policies have been made without adequate consultation with teachers, principals, parents or students themselves. Precipitate action like the Ministry's latest move with transliterated English names seems to be another example of forcing policies down people's throats. We simply cannot afford to have people harbouring ill feelings towards any ministry, and still less, the government at large.

kuah khun eng

Clipped Wings

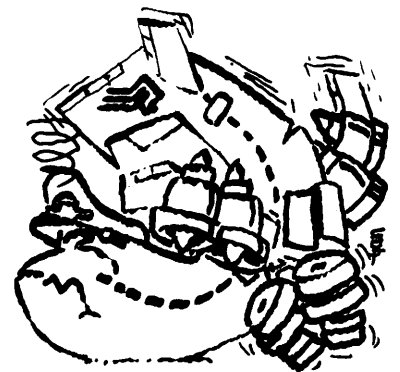
It began innocently enough, — a trade union negotiating with management for revised wages for members in the spirit of bipartism. Negotiations broke down when management failed to give counter proposals to the wage claims made.

With this, the Singapore Airlines Pilots Association (SIAPA) which apparently had little faith in the processes of the Industrial Arbitration Court, embarked on an 'unofficial' work-to-rule to lend bite to their claims.

And they really bit hard as flights were thrown off-schedule, thousands of passengers were inconvenienced, and much goodwill and prestige were lost.

The lashback was not late in coming. And it surprisingly came first from the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) which criticised the Ministry of Labour for not taking SIAPA to task for her premature 'industrial action'. This was a build-up to a broadside by Devan Nair who branded SIAPA as being 'disloyal to the nation'.

The matter was then referred to the Industrial Arbitration Court, but feelings still ran high and SIAPA officials lost some measure of control of their members as more flights were disrupted in spite of the officials' attempts to stop the 'industrial action'.



SIA management then raised the mailed fist by sacking the cockpit crew of a B747 aircraft which was disrupted at Zurich on its way to London from Singapore.



The battle was still raging when Prime Minister Lee returned from his China visit. With characteristic bluntness and toughness, he hauled up the SIAPA officials and warned that he would ground SIA and sack all pilots unless they could prove that they would restore order to flight operations within a month.

This dramatic and unprecedented action had the desired effect as SIAPA succumbed. More important it demonstrated Mr. Lee's determination that the basis of Singapore's industrial relations system which he had so painstakingly built over the years should prevail.

He underlined this further by refusing to allow SIA and SIAPA to continue wage negotiations because it would set a bad example

to other managements and unions.

Mr. Lee's exhibition was in itself an exercise in political mastery, and it displayed his superb grasp of human psychology. Mr. Lee probably knew that he would not have to carry out his warning though he could and would do so if it came to the crunch.

The decision to ground an airline and sack its pilots is not an easy one to come by. For one thing, thousands of other airline-related jobs would have been endangered, revenue from tourism would have been adversely affected, and the ire of the international community of pilots would have been roused. For another, it would be difficult to restart an airline if the sacked pilots were to refuse re-employment with the 'new' airline. And with the anger of the international pilots'

community aroused, it would also be unlikely that foreign pilots could be recruited.

However, Mr. Lee obviously knew the human mind well, especially the Singaporean's mind. He took the well-calculated gamble that the majority of SIA pilots would return to the fold if a 'new' airline were to be started. For these pilots it was not so much the fear of not being able to get another job than that of having to tear up their roots and moving to other countries if they wished to continue employing the skills they had acquired as pilots. And SIAPA was aware of this too.



The masterstroke came when Mr. Lee had the President of SIAPA "put in his own words" the agreement SIAPA reached at the meeting with the Prime Minister. By so doing, he turned a month-old dispute into a lesson for all other unions and managements that any one who transgressed the industrial relations procedures of the land would be severely dealt with and without compunction.

fong hoe fang

The Personality Trap



Phey Yew Kok has come and gone. And while his foes rub their hands in glee nodding "I-told-you-so's", his ex-supporters try to forget a bad dream by maintaining a stony silence, giving only the most necessary comments.

Such things do happen, and it will happen again even in the best planned of all systems. There is just no system in the world which can prevent a betrayal of trust.

Much to their credit, the government took positive steps to rectify the situation when it suspected that something was amiss. Subsequent investigations by the Corrupt Practices Investigations Bureau (CPIB) led to Phey being charged in court, and it speaks much of the government's steely determination

that they should come into open confrontation with a powerful trade union leader who commanded a sizable following of his own. The rest of the case is of course, history.

But a lesson must be learnt from this. No matter how painful or embarrassing the effort, investigations into this case must be conducted, not with the view of finding a whipping boy, but rather to examine the shortcomings of a system which has allowed so much power to one man and opened up so many avenues of possible abuse.

Phey has undoubtedly done much to make the Union movement in Singapore what it is today, and one must not forget his contributions. However, in building up the unions, he created a personality cult which unfortunately, people mistook for a system. His enemies acted with the understanding that they could not confront the man and survive while his supporters based their actions on the premise that he could do no wrong.

This absolute allegiance to the man made it that much easier for him to hold total sway over the fortunes of his organisation, to be unquestioned in his actions, and consequently to diminished accountability on his part.

All these are fertile breeding grounds for the building of private fiefdoms and the abuse of power.

The existence of the CPIB as an independent body under the Prime Minister's Office to act as a check against corruption, and its effectiveness, is a tribute to the government's desire for a corruption-free society. Two things however stand out.

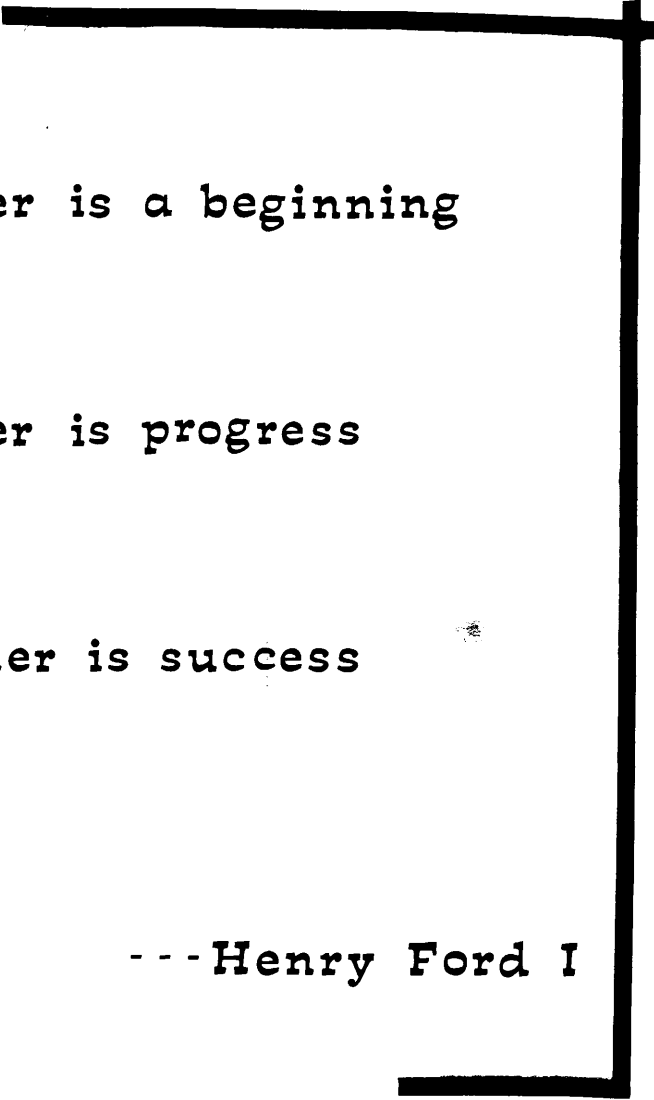
Firstly, the CPIB cannot be everywhere at the same time. For every Phey Yew Kok charged, there could be another ten unnoticed. For every Wee Toon Boon exposed, there could be ten other guilty ones.

Secondly, the CPIB investigates the individual and not the system. Perhaps its role has been defined as such and its hands are tied.

But there is clearly a need for checks to systems which may in themselves be oppressive, or which may unintentionally encourage the abuse of power and perpetuate injustices. One answer to this is to ensure that any designed system should have built-in checks — checks that do not fear rank and office, and which would even take government to task if necessary, in the pursuit of truth and justice.

fong hoe fang

B



Getting together is a beginning

Staying together is progress

Working together is success

--- Henry Ford I

UNITED FOR
FRONT FOR
PARLIMENT!!

I BELIEVE IN
CHIAN SEE TONG

Santa SuiKa
PRIMS

HARBAN SINGH AND
UPF FOR ME! ALL
YOTE FOR UPF!
UPF! UPF! UPF!

JUSTICE