

SPEECH
by
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YOUNG PAP
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DARE TO DREAM

Ladies and gentlemen, and members of the Young PAP:

Today, our theme is about “60 years forward.” But, before I talk about the future, let’s take a step back - to 1954 – to a time when the PAP was just formed. When it was a party of young people, dreaming of freedom.

There is a sense of eagerness in their eyes, and hope in their hearts – hope for a Singapore of equals, where work is dignified and free from oppression, hope for a place where we can call our home.

You might wonder what I am doing here talking about hope and history when I am supposed to be talking about 60 years into the future. Well, ladies and gentlemen, believe it or not, the People’s Action Party was built by the Young PAP!

Don’t believe me? Let me give you a few examples.

Lee Kuan Yew: Age 31 - became secretary general of the PAP and then went on to become the first Prime Minister of Singapore.

Goh Keng Swee: Age 36 - Interest in politics ignited during his university days in London with his fellow schoolmates who were returning scholars. He went on to become our Deputy Prime Minister and held various portfolios in Finance and Defence.

Toh Chin Chye: Age 33 - He served as the chairman of the People’s Action Party and went on to hold several portfolios

S Rajaratnam: He was just 36, young and fiery.

This is just a snapshot of the many young people in the PAP who dared to dream.

Today, we, the Young PAP, continue these political dreams, with a new group of young people. Many of us advocate a cause. The PAP Policy Forum has given valuable inputs on health and education. The Women's Wing has written a position paper on seniors in Singapore.

Looking into the future, I am just picking out three big ideas today.

One: We work towards a society of true equals. A Singapore where there is respect for all jobs regardless of pay, education and skill set. Where stay home fathers are as respected as stay home mothers.

Where we are equal, perhaps not in outcomes, but in opportunities,

Today, we talk a lot about income inequality, but there are other types of inequalities: in wealth, in the abilities we are born with, gender... As one of our activists, Hamidah believes strongly "Women and men should both be equally free to achieve their personal and professional dreams. Both equally supported by a strong family network. We want to take this battle to bridge the issues of inequality to the next level. This is not about being perfect but it is about bridging that gap, step by step, year on year.

Two: A green society. We love green as much as we love the colour white.

Imagine - a Singapore with even cleaner air without cars, but where transportation is seamless - there are cycling paths, walking pathways, extensive underground networks that take you to many places, driverless electric vehicles, mini-trains. How nice it would be to get from Expo to Orchard in just 15 minutes! And it takes the same time whether you choose to take the train or bus or both!

We want to see a zero-waste Singapore; a 100% recycling community with no need for incineration plants, refuse collections and dumping sites. We, Singaporeans, are known for our food - but we have been wasting our precious food too. We hit a record high in 2013. We want a record low in the next 600 years - and that magic number is zero! This is not a dream. It is a realistic goal that we should work towards.

Third, we aim to be a society governed not by the rigidity of rules but by the desire of each individual to create a better society and a more harmonious community.

Where conflicts are resolved communally;

Where we do not litter not because there is a law that punishes littering, but because we are driven by love for the environment and consideration for others;

Where we pay taxes not because we are compelled by laws to redistribute wealth to the poor but do so because of a desire to help our fellow countrymen.

This is not about setting more rules for ourselves but governing based on two things: common sense and common purpose.

We want a Singapore where 60 years from now, medical technology should have harvested the 2 Es for major illnesses and chronic diseases: Effective and easy-to-use medication. They should be affordable and training provided to Singaporeans on how to administer them. In this way, young Singaporeans would be able to take care of our elderly in the comfort of their homes.

So in 50 years, we dream of a Singapore with no cars, no waste, 100 per cent recycling, and a sense of collective destiny driving our social behaviour. Are these dreams impossible?

They could very well be. But how many would think that when we separated from Malaysia, we could one day be self-sufficient in water?

Ladies and gentlemen, those are big dreams, but the Young PAP dreams big, as it did 60 years ago. We dare to dream and work towards turning that dream into reality. We believe strongly that we need an “engine of fire” to drive these dreams into reality: That engine of fire is: Active volunteerism starts naturally from the age of 5!

Active volunteerism leads to youth leadership. As Mr. Goh Keng Swee once said: “Young people have a capacity for idealism and dedication which is rare among grown-ups many of whom, perhaps, have been made sour and cynical by the harshness of life”. For example, we have our very own Jake Tan, another YP activist, who is driven by the smile and happiness he sees on residents’ faces.

He dedicates an enormous amount of time mentoring and walking the talk with his fellow junior activists to “spread this fire of active volunteering.”

We want to continue spreading this active volunteering spirit in our young children until -coming forward to serve becomes a way of life - a part of us!

Ladies and gentlemen, I spoke of common sense and common purpose. The question is then – how do we find this common purpose? What brand of politics do we want in Singapore? Are we sour and cynical? Do we want to be reduced to a society where discussions of important issues are reduced to brief sarcastic comments online? Or a society that complains about everything no matter how trivial these may be?

There are those who make their rounds in public speeches, saying Singapore is going downhill, and probably doomed. They praise PAP of the past, and at the same time, ridicule the PAP of today – they say, yes PAP had some good ideas but it was all in the past.

Today, we stand against these naysayers.

Today, we say – Singapore is still a land of possibilities.

Today, we say – the PAP is still the party with big ideas.

Ours is a brand of ideas for change; but it is not just ideas and mere rhetoric,

It is also a brand of pragmatic solutions and real actions. (I repeat: real actions). This brand was created by Singaporeans before there was a Singapore. Mr Rajaratnam spoke of a “democracy of deeds” – action and real impact. This is outlined in our new proposed Constitution “To develop a democracy of deeds, where citizenship embodies both rights and duties, and nurtures a sense of collective responsibility and community action.”

The PAP started with a group of young men and women with impossible dreams and big ideas. Today, there are many of us both young men and women in the Young PAP and we are calling for action.

Come forward if you have a burning fire to challenge the norm.

Come forward if you want to build this land of hope and ideals. Come forward if you believe in equality, sustainable green development and a society that self-organises for the common good.

Politics is a calling unlike any other. It calls not just to Ministers and MPs, but to all of us! This journey is not going to be easy....

You will get flamed;

Your family will be flamed.

Your children will get flamed.

You will be criticised online and offline.

But you know what? If this be so, we walk in the footsteps of our political fathers - They battled for our Singapore...Everything was against them...everything...Politics is not for the faint-hearted. ..It takes determination and will power. If our founding fathers did not take that brave step forward in 1954, we would have been nothing today.

If there is flaming, today, let it be known that you are not alone. We are in this together...

Each one of us - we have a chance to serve and to provide for those we love, for our countrymen – progress, security, comfort, prosperity and happiness – to continue for the next 60 years and beyond. Thank you.

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