

**TRANSCRIPT OF EULOGY
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AT THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE MR LEE KUAN YEW
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UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE AUDITORIUM**

1 As one who worked closely with Mr Lee Kuan Yew for a period I just want to focus on just four aspects of his leadership that remain with me.

2 First, he had an absolute obsession to ensure an honest, corruption free political process and public administration system. He had seen the damage a nation and society suffer when well-meaning leaders allow those close to them to take advantage of their position. Mr. Lee demanded and expected honesty and probity from political colleagues, from his equivalent of “Long March” comrades, public servants and from all members of his family.

3 He was sometimes seen as a hard-hearted man who acted without feelings. But on the few occasions he discussed privately with me the decision to act against someone, I know that he agonized over the decision. He was convinced that a soft-hearted approach would undermine the ethos he wanted to embed deeply in public service.

4 The second point is how he planned succession. What is still vivid in my mind is the time and mental energy he spent to prepare us for the responsibilities ahead. Much of the time in Cabinet meetings was spent with him sharing his experience in politics, in policy making and implementation. He circulated and discussed critically, essays and commentaries from journals and newspapers.

5 When he made official visits and went to conferences, he always made it a point to take a few of us in the younger team along with him to familiarize us with how to interact with the leaders of other nations and observe how to probe, to get a better understanding of global events. He would always try to seek the relevance to Singapore of his and our observations.

6 We were deeply sensitized to looking at everything in terms of what we could do in and for Singapore or, equally important, what we should avoid doing. Mr Lee never tired of repeating his war stories, observations, and conclusions about events and personalities. To me he was Minister Mentor from the time I started working with him.

7 The third point is the way he took decisions. The myth is that he brooked no opposition to what he wanted and that the Cabinet members merely fell in line. That

was not my experience. He argued tirelessly to get Cabinet to accept his views not because it was the PM's view but because of the strength of his arguments. I think he felt he had failed were he not able to convince his Cabinet colleagues.

8 When he spoke as Prime Minister at important occasions he sent drafts of his speeches to his colleagues for views and suggestions before he settled on the final version. The idea that he expected his team to follow him like a herd of sheep without question completely misrepresents the man and his values.

9 The last point concerns his reputation as the complete political pragmatist who did not allow idealism to get in the way of what would work in and for Singapore. He was a pragmatist, yet in a very deep sense he was an idealist. He was obsessed with not only what would work in Singapore, but what the feel and timbre of our society should be. This is well illustrated by his approach to the language policy. In a population comprising 75% Chinese, the easiest way to ensure political support and electoral support would have been to champion Chinese language and, behind that, Chinese chauvinism.

10 He was convinced that for our nation to be distinct and different from other nations we had to be multi-lingual with English as the main language of administration and commerce. But each racial group must maintain its cultural identity with their mother tongue as a second language. To convert Chinese schools into national type schools and push for Mandarin against Chinese dialects were the acts of an idealist, not the acts of a pragmatist.

11 Today we come to say our farewell to Mr Lee Kuan Yew who is in a complete sense the Father of our Singapore that we know. Up to the very end he was committed to this nation. In the words of Tennyson, though "made weak by time and fate", he remained "strong in will", determined not to "rust unburnished" but "to shine in use".

12 Farewell Sir.
