



Emergency committee for human rights  
in Singapore

---

UPDATE 28  
SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

MARCH 1990

---

POLITICAL BRIEFS

---

PRIME MINISTER'S LIBEL CASE

"IT'S A MESSY BUSINESS ATTACKING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH"  
Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in Parliament  
27 May 1988

---

For 3 weeks from 25 Sept 89, PM Lee attempted to prove in court that he was not attacking the Catholic Church. The occasion was a libel suit he brought against the Hongkong-based Far Eastern Economic Review for printing an article on 17 Dec 87 which gave a priest's view that the PM was indeed attacking the church and that the Catholic Archbishop had been cornered into making a press statement amenable to the government following the arrest of church workers under the Internal Security Act.

The court proceedings seemed to prove in almost every detail the accuracy of the Review article (article reprinted following). But, needless to say, the PM's suit was successful since he has the judiciary on short-term contracts and various defence witnesses (the priest who made the statement and an English bishop, for example) were not permitted to testify. Further, defence counsel was not permitted by the judge to pursue various lines of argument or to examine the Prime Minister on the above statement he made in parliament.

However, the case is an important one and will no doubt, for political rather than legal reasons, be one of the more celebrated in Singapore's legal history. More than a dozen volumes of proceedings and the 18 hours the Prime Minister spent in the witness box, some of it under intense and forceful questioning from defence counsel Geoffrey Robertson QC, ensure that it must be a landmark case. This is because much more was revealed than the prime minister probably intended about his politics and his strategy for suppressing the church and the media.

The government-controlled Straits Times gave the case massive daily coverage of 3 or 4 pages which read like press releases

Sponsors: • Jim Anderton M.P. • Jocelyn Armstrong • Katie Boanas • Prof J Burrows • Very Rev Dr Alan Brash • Jan Cormack • Fr John Curnow • Sonja Davies M.P. • Manuka Henare • Canon Hone Kaa • Michael Knowles • Margaret Lovell-Smith • Archdeacon Alan McKenzie • Sir Guy Powles • Rev Barbara Stephens • Rev David M Taylor • Bishop Whakahuihui Vercoe •

from the prime minister's office: "Communist tactics of a radical Casanova priest", "Human Rights agitation will not change ISA [Internal Security Act]", "PM Stresses his High Regard for the Church", "PM saw danger of using emotion and evoking God's name", "PM's Vatican Card: Do-It-Yourself Revolution Issue Raised During Papal Visit [in 1986]". The Singapore public were treated to this hype for 3 weeks in the guise of court reportage.

#### HE DOTHT PROTEST TOO MUCH

However, Lee was reportedly disappointed that the case did not achieve much international coverage as it was a major attempt by him to restore his political image. The lack of coverage is at least partly due to his expulsion of many foreign correspondents and his refusal to accept replacements. Another reason is that the libel action was based on an article which, in any other country, would appear unexceptional and certainly not libellous.

PM Lee seems not to have awoken to the fact that he is simply not believed by most international observers and probably most Singaporeans. The latter may or may not agree that he has reason to crack down on the church but almost nobody is likely to think that he is not doing it. The more the prime minister protests he is not attacking the church, the less credible his claims are sounding. It is a curious lapse of political judgement possibly brought on by the hubris of an elder statesman.

#### DETAIL OF PROCEEDINGS

For space reasons, UPDATE cannot reprint the full reports of the proceedings. We can only reprint the article which was at the centre of the case and also a brief article from the authoritative British Catholic weekly The Tablet on 28 Oct. For a fuller coverage, readers should refer to the Far Eastern Economic Review of the following dates in 1989: 5 Oct; 12 Oct; 19 Oct; 26 Oct; 14 Dec and also 4 Jan 1990.

Note that Update 27 incorrectly reported Geoffrey Robertson QC as being from Sydney. He is from London.

#### REVIEW WILL APPEAL

On 30 Nov 89, Justice L P Thean predictably decided in favour of the Prime Minister and awarded S\$230,000 damages against the Review. On 22 Dec 89 the Review served notice of appeal to the Court of Appeal. It has also indicated that it wants to take the matter as far as the Privy Council in London. Under Singapore's amended laws, this last appeal requires the agreement of both parties. PM Lee may decline if he thinks his case will fail in London.

On 20 Dec 89, the Singapore Attorney-General brought a contempt of court action against the Asian Wall Street Journal for its 1 Dec article on the libel case decision. The article reported the statement by Peter Kann, president of Dow Jones & Co., owner of the Review (and the Journal), commenting on the decision:

The article at issue contained an essentially accurate portrayal of highly newsworthy events relating to the detention without trial of Catholic social workers by the Lee government, and relations between the Catholic Church and Mr Lee. Solely because it was read to be critical of Mr Lee, however, it has resulted in this unwarranted determination against the Review. We can only hope that in the long term, the Review's punishment will not, as doubtlessly intended, still honest and independent voices in Singapore.... [It is] indisputable that no people is free so long as its rulers forbid criticism and its press can report only that which the government finds acceptable.

The above statement is the basis of the contempt action and is claimed to be "grossly contemptuous of the courts in Singapore" and "would inevitably lead citizens and others who have recourse to our Courts to question the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary in Singapore". Unfortunately for the Attorney-General, it is the government itself which has done most to achieve these particular ends.

#### US HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION RESPONDS

On 21 Dec ASIA WATCH condemned the contempt charges. "This action fits a consistent pattern of government hostility to the foreign press. Lee Kuan Yew's government has stooped to a new level of pettiness, but in using criminal charges to silence its critics, Lee has sent an ominous signal to all journalists and their publishers, both inside and outside Singapore, that freedom of the press will not be tolerated," said Asia Watch director Sidney Jones.

#### OPPOSITION LAWYER SUES SINGAPORE GOVT IN ENGLAND

The following report appeared in the English Law Society magazine late last year:

### LITIGATION



● Joshua Benjamin Jeyaretnam is suing the Singaporean Government, its High Commissioner in London, and the *Straits Times* newspaper. Jeyaretnam was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn and went on to lead the opposition Workers Party in Singapore. The plaintiff's claim is for libel.

Jeyaretnam sat as an MP in the Singaporean Legislature from November 1981 until its dissolution in August 1988.

The cases arise out of the Singaporean government's response to an article by Bernard Levin, published in *The Times* on 19 September this year under the title "The Law Grossly Misused".

The High Commissioner responded to the article by writing a letter to *The Times*, which was published only after the Commissioner had agreed to the omission of one paragraph and the alteration of another.

The Singaporean Government then persuaded the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* to accept advertisements saying that it had not had a proper opportunity to reply to Levin's article.

The plaintiff says there were innuendoes in these advertisements. The innuendo was that the Singaporean High Commissioner's original letter alleged the plaintiff had been guilty of discreditable conduct "unworthy of a lawyer and a politician" which the Singaporean Government could verify.

The original letter of the High Commissioner was published in full in another Government advertisement, in the *Straits Times* on August 1989. Although published in Singapore, copies of the newspaper are sold in the UK.

That letter, the plaintiff claims, libelled him in that it alleged he had defrauded creditors of the Workers Party and shown incompetence in his conduct as counsel.

Martin Thomas, QC, and Robert Britton drafted the writ for Penningtons (J-7867).

Similar reports appeared in the Review (14 Sept; 12 Oct) and the Straits Times 5 Oct.

Bernard Levin's articles in The Times have been very embarrassing for the Singapore government because they uncover the truth mercilessly before an international audience. The Lee government's litigious steamroller cannot touch Levin. Now the government is on the defensive in the face of Jeyaretnam's legal action. It first tried to contain the damage by refusing to waive the diplomatic immunity of the Singapore High Commissioner in London so that he could not be sued. This was supposed to force Jeyaretnam to seek redress in the Singapore courts where he could not possibly succeed. However, the fact that the Straits Times is sold in London and that it carried the full defamatory innuendos that were excised from the govt ads. in the British papers has prompted Jeyaretnam to proceed in England.

The article "The Law Grossly Misused" by Bernard Levin in THE TIMES 19 June (not Sept as in above report) is reprinted in the media section together with the govt advertisement and Levin's follow-up article "A lively trade in vilification" 24 Aug 89.

#### ELDERLY REMNANT OF COMMUNIST PARTY SIGNS TRUCE PACT

Ending 40 years of armed struggle, the near-defunct Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) signed an agreement with representatives of the Malaysian and Thai governments in southern Thailand on 2 Dec 1989. The CPM secretary-general Chin Peng and central committee member Rashid Maidin signed the agreement.

This Thai Govt-arranged truce is acutely embarrassing for the Singapore govt which has always used the imaginary threat of communist subversion to justify its use of the Internal Security Act. Of the church and community workers it detained without trial in 1987, the government alleged:

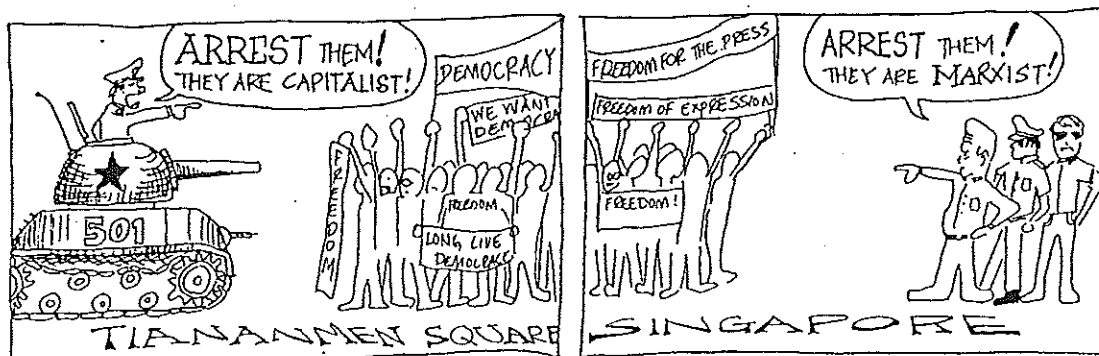
...[their "plot"] was not an indigenous, independent amateur effort at subversion. It was a CPM operation to make inroads into English-educated groups using English-educated intellectuals.

With the CPM so plainly enfeebled and surrendering hundreds of miles away to other governments, the Singapore Govt's allegations look even more outrageous. The Straits Times retold the official version of history on 2 Dec 89 and still connected the detainees with the CPM. But even the Government knows this to lack credibility and has now identified a new enemy to justify its continuing repression.

On 29 Nov, a few days before the truce signing, Singapore Home Affairs Minister Jayakumar stated in parliament that Singapore

had no plans to abolish the Internal Security Act. He said there were still threats from communalism, religious extremism, international terrorism, espionage and subversion. He did not mention that all these threats can be met under existing legislation other than the ISA.

On 15 Jan 90 Minister Jayakumar said detainee Chia Thye Poh will not be able to return to the main island of Singapore just because the CPM has ceased its hostilities. Chia has always rejected the allegation that he was a member of the CPM and his refusal to confess resulted in his extended imprisonment without trial.



Cartoon from human rights pamphlet in Singapore

This article (especially columns 2 & 3) was the basis of the PM's libel action.

## SINGAPORE

# New light on detentions

### Catholic priest answers Jayakumar's allegations

By Michael Mallik

Some new light has been shed on the Singapore Government's detention of 22 people in May and June this year for alleged involvement in a Marxist conspiracy, by Roman Catholic priest Fr Edgar D'Souza's account of the confrontation between Archbishop Gregory Yong and Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

D'Souza issued a statement from Melbourne, Australia, in answer to allegations made against him in the Singapore parliament on 30 November by Home Affairs Minister S. Jayakumar, who accused him of involving himself in a campaign to discredit the Singapore Government. In order to allow people to judge the priest's worth as a "witness and protagonist," Jayakumar said it was necessary to expose his "illicit" relationship with a woman.

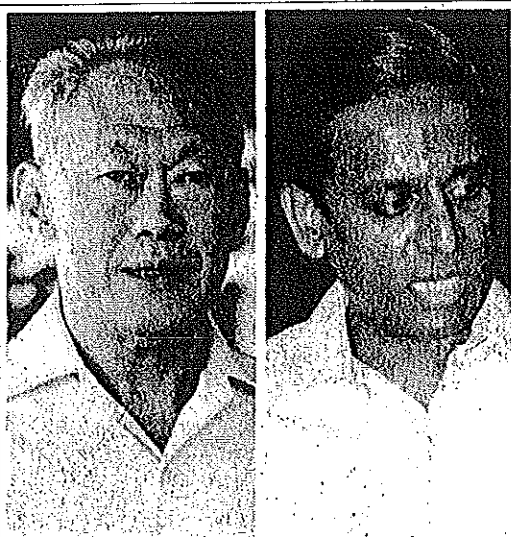
Although such matters ordinarily would be of no concern of the government, Jayakumar said, when D'Souza instigated foreigners to interfere in Singapore's internal affairs, his standing and credibility became "a matter of importance."

In his statement issued in reply, D'Souza said that he did not go to Australia or New Zealand to stir up agitation against Singapore. He had been contacted by individuals and groups, mainly with church and human-rights interests, seeking information and clarification of the situation in Singapore. They were puzzled, D'Souza said, that arrests and detention without trial could take place in a democratic country.

On his personal life, he said it was a private matter which only concerned himself and his religious superior. There was a conflict, he said, between his love for the Catholic priesthood and his love for a person. He was in the process of coming to a decision on how to resolve it. But D'Souza revealed that he had left Singapore hurriedly on 3 June after receiving information that he and three other priests, despite having agreed to resign their official positions and stop their social work, were in danger of arrest.

D'Souza said this followed a stormy meeting on 2 June — after the detention of a first batch of 16 people, mostly associated with church organisations — between Lee and Yong and a party of 10 church officials from which D'Souza and eight others who knew or worked with some of those detained, had been specifically excluded by the government. D'Souza said that an account of this meeting was given to all available Singapore priests by Yong the next day.

Before the meeting with Lee, Yong was read a signed statement by Vincent Cheng, accused as the organiser of the alleged Marxist conspiracy, which Yong said confirmed government allegations and implicated four priests, including D'Souza, in a plot to use the church to further Marxist interests. When Yong said he had not been warned of such "subversive activities," Lee produced transcripts of three meetings between the archbishop and officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs between December 1985 and July 1986 at which concern had been expressed over the church's Justice and Peace Commission



Lee, Jayakumar: international campaign.

PHOTOS: TAY HOON

and the *Catholic News* publication, in both of which D'Souza was involved. Yong expressed surprise at the transcripts since there had been no secretary or tape-recorder visible at the meetings.

While Yong was saying that he felt the government should prove its case against the detainees "in toto," Lee "often looked at his watch and at one stage interrupted and asked how much longer Yong needed," D'Souza said. Lee was forceful in his assertion that a collision between church and state appeared inevitable and would not be good for either. He said that he was ready to use the powers of the Internal Security Act if deemed necessary, if Yong could not put his own house in order.

D'Souza reported: "A member of the church delegation said that it was hard to believe this was not an attack against the church. The real target seemed not to be the 16 [detainees] who

were merely scapegoats, but rather the four priests."

According to D'Souza, Yong told the church meeting that Lee said that Tan Wah Piow, the alleged exiled leader of the "conspiracy," was a simpleton. He said he did not know if Tan was a communist and anyway he was outside Singapore's jurisdiction. The other 16, Yong quoted Lee as saying, were "stupid novices but could be controlled from outside."

Yong also told the priests that as he was leaving the meeting accompanied by Lee, he was shown into a room where a press conference had been called without his knowledge. He reported that he felt "cornered" and confirmed before television cameras that he had had no way to disprove the statement signed by Cheng. But he also said that he had added: "I will take things at their face value for now." This sentence, however, was omitted from the statement as shown on state-run television and published in *The Straits Times* newspaper.

At the church meeting the next day, Yong then told the priests under attack: "The PM [Lee] will not arrest you because you are priests but because of your 'other activities.' In that case there would be nothing we can do for you." According to D'Souza, one of the priests asked Yong if he did not think they were doing church work. Yong replied: "It is not what I think, but what they [the government] think."

On 4 June, it was announced that the four priests had resigned their positions to help avoid a church-state conflict. Yong, the next day, suspended them from preaching or making contact with the church-associated social work organisation they had been in charge of. By that time, believing there was still a 50% chance he would be arrested, D'Souza had left for Australia to join his family.

In a report to the Vatican on the issue, a copy of which was sent to D'Souza on his request, Yong revealed that a representative of the Internal Security Department (ISD) had told him that such suspensions were necessary if "no harm" was to come to the priests. In the report, Yong wrote: "We were informed that ISD men were at the airport when he [D'Souza] left. We do not know what would have happened if we had not suspended him and three other priests."

D'Souza told the REVIEW on 7 December that, while he was technically on leave from Singapore until mid-December, "in view of what has happened," it would be difficult for him to return, though he could not confirm that he had resigned. ■

# Mr Lee cracks the whip

Desmond O'Grady

The Prime Minister of Singapore and its Catholic Archbishop collided in the summer of 1987 over the arrest and detention of some ten church workers who were alleged to be part of a subversive Marxist conspiracy. The proceedings of a libel action, which came to trial in Singapore earlier this month, have been very revealing of the Prime Minister's suspicions and the Archbishop's difficulties. Desmond O'Grady, an Australian journalist living in Rome, has just returned from a journey to South-East Asia.

A rift in relations between the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, and the Catholic Church in 1987 has been explored in detail in the trial of a libel action in the high court of Singapore. Evidence given by Mr Lee, who is a party to the proceedings, has revealed the depths of his distrust of the activities of church workers in the field of social justice. It comes at a time when the government of Singapore has proposed replacing religious instruction in schools with civics lessons and introducing a law preventing religious "interference" in politics.

The libel action was brought by the Prime Minister against the Hong Kong-based weekly *Far Eastern Economic Review* for an article published in December 1987 about the detention of social justice activists. That month Singapore authorities decided to restrict the review's circulation in the state to 500 copies: it had been running at over 9,000 copies.

Mr Lee has been Prime Minister since the separation of Singapore from Malaysia in 1965. It is virtually a one-party state, dominated by the People's Action Party, and Lee, who has promised to step aside in 1990, is a more or less benevolent dictator. The government is efficient and not financially corrupt but it wants to regulate all aspects of the citizens' lives, even eugenics, and does not tolerate criticism.

The main ethnic groups which share the island — the Chinese (75 per cent), Malays (15 per cent) and Indians (7 per cent) have few common traditions. Most of the Chinese follow folk-religions. There is the same proportion of Buddhists (8.6 per cent) as of Christians. The 120,000 Catho-

lics have a status disproportionate to their numbers because of their schools and hospitals.

This island-city-state is small and overcrowded. Its water comes from Malaysia and it has to import most of its food, yet it has become one of the world's most economically buoyant nations. Its port is the world's busiest, its airport probably the world's best. It is a great trading and financial centre.

## Rocking the boat

Discipline has been essential to this success. There are 250-dollar fines for so little as dropping a cigarette butt in the streets or jaywalking. Anything that rocks the boat meets official disapproval.

In May 1987, 16 people including 10 lay Catholics were detained. One of the four full-time church workers was Vincent Cheng, secretary of the diocesan justice and peace commission which has since been in abeyance. Cheng and Teo Soh Lung, a non-Catholic woman lawyer, are still in prison, the other 14 having been released. Detention orders against them have been extended for another year. Both are in their forties, both deny implications in Marxist subversion as alleged, and both have complained of mistreatment in prison. They were apprehended under the Internal Security Act which absolves the government from bringing detainees to trial or testing the evidence against them in a law court.

After the arrest of the 16 Archbishop Gregory Yong Sook Ngeean fluctuated between support for the detainees and endorsement of the government's action. Lee considered him to be under the influence of his radical priests, particularly Fr Edgar D'Souza, editor of the fortnightly *Catholic News*. He said in court that he wished Archbishop Yong had "spine" enough to be a "general of his division". In his attempts to bring the archbishop into line, Lee apparently found an ally in Mgr Giovanni D'Aniello, chargé d'affaires in the Vatican nunciature in Bangkok, which is responsible also for diplomatic relations with Singapore. But the priests of the diocese campaigned on behalf of the detainees, issuing statements and offering prayers for them and Masses at which the detainees' relatives were allowed to speak. Lee saw this as a recipe for civil turmoil.

On 12 June 1987 Archbishop Yong, six priests and three lay people met Lee at his residence. Afterwards Archbishop Yong told the press: "We are satisfied that the government of Singapore had nothing against the Catholic Church when it detained 10 of our church workers among the 16 who were arrested for possible involvement in a clandestine Communist network."

The article the following December in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* maintained that Lee forced Archbishop Yong to make this statement and that the government's target was not the detainees but Fr D'Souza and three other priests: in other words, that Lee wanted to clip the Church's wings. Finding that D'Souza was the source of this "smear" Lee decided, as he told the court, that "I must demolish him . . . I was able to demolish the smearer without much difficulty". The government put it about that D'Souza had had a protracted love affair with a woman lawyer. He had left the country soon after the arrests, and lives in Australia and has ceased to minister as a priest. Lee, who says he is tired of foreign journalists meddling in Singapore politics, of their "groin-kicking and condescension", then initiated action against the *Review* for suggesting that he was attacking the Church.

I asked a Singapore priest whether he felt that the government's attitude to the Church was repressive. "Only a little more so than to most other sections of society" was his reply. "It wants to regiment everything." He added: "It is unsettling that one never knows what the government will consider as political meddling." And: "Please don't use my name."

Lee Kuan Yew's 18 hours in the witness box were revealing. For the defence Geoffrey Robertson claimed that the Prime Minister became obsessed with the possibility of a revolution in Singapore on the Philippines model, encouraged by the Church, after a visit there three years ago. Lee's comments certainly revealed a fear of the "peoples' power" movement in the Philippines. He said he told Mgr D'Aniello to keep four Singapore priests "out of politics, and to find out who in the Philippines . . . were giving them these ideas of justice, freedom, democracy and so on". He referred to "the rhetoric that was beginning to percolate through D'Souza to this group". (Only one of the four priests is still active in Singapore.)

Lee also said that a recommendation of the Federation of Asian (Catholic) Bishops in 1986 that priests should be involved in human rights issues did not "fit" with the situation in Singapore. He recalled also how the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, once told him that Catholic liberation theology could be part of the reason for the clash between the Church of England and Margaret Thatcher. Lee affirmed that he would not let liberation theology be put into practice in Singapore.

Judgement in the libel case is now awaited. However the suit turns out, for some observers Lee has passed judgement on himself.

## Rumblings of discontent surface in the ruling party

# Muted protest

By N. Balakrishnan

A proposal to nominate members to Singapore's parliament has sparked passionate and public objections from the normally docile MPs of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP). While the bill eventually passed its second reading in parliament, the debate indicated growing factionalism in the party with the expected transfer of prime ministership from Lee Kuan Yew to First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong by late next year.

The bill to enable the government to nominate up to six un-elected MPs (to be called nominated MPs), began its second reading on 29 November. The parliament, of 81 seats, has only one full-fledged opposition MP and another opposition MP with restricted voting rights, though the opposition polled nearly 41% of the votes cast in the last general elections in 1988.

But surprisingly, in the two-day debate that followed, seven ruling party MPs joined the two opposition MPs in opposing the proposal. They said it undercut such fundamentals of democracy as representation and accountability and harked back to colonial days, when legislators were appointed by the government. Considering that only 18 MPs spoke on the bill and even those who supported it did so with some reservations, the level of opposition to the move seemed significant.

Also significant was the fact that the PAP members who spoke against the proposal included two powerful MPs associated with the "feedback" unit set up to convey the public mood to the government. The former chairman of the unit, Tan Cheng Bok, and the current chairman, Chandra Das, both spoke out against the proposal.

Tan compared the current proposals to those made by the British colonial rulers in 1955 to nominate lawmakers and said that parliament was not the right forum for non-elected representatives to advise the government. He even quoted an earlier speech made by Lee in 1967 on such proposals. According to Tan, Lee said at that time: "If anybody challenges the right of representatives of the people to take a particular course of action, then they must have the courage to come out openly into the political arena and denounce these policies."

Chandra Das said that the nominated members would be "toothless tigers" and "second-class MPs" and that the proposals may be seen by the public as a scheme to perpetuate the ruling party's dominance

while thwarting the public's desire to have genuine opposition MPs in the parliament.

The government's case was stated by Goh, who said that the proposal would help non-political Singaporeans, or Singaporeans who were forbidden by company regulations from participating in politics — such as the executives of foreign multinationals — to participate in politics. He did not make it clear how being in parliament as a nominated member could be considered "not participating" in politics. The system also would help build a "consensus" democracy, said Goh, who added that the move would help dispel the public misconception that the government was afraid of dissent.

MP Arthur Beng said that if the government felt the performance of the PAP backbenchers was poor and it wanted to introduce outsiders to prod them, it should call a referendum or form a constitutional commission to study the matter. He branded the nominated MPs "illegal immigrants" without the people's mandate.

Predictably, the opposition MPs Chiam See Tong and Lee Siew Choh spoke against the proposals. Chiam pointed out that Singapore's ratio of one MP to about 20,000 people, already was higher than in many democracies. The proposal was aimed at perpetuating the PAP's power while giving the impression that the government was generously amending the constitution to accommodate people's wishes for more opposition MPs.

Chiam said that if the government really wanted an opposition, it should be "fair at the polls and not resort to smear tactics, changing of the ground rules, changing of boundary rules, juggling with constituencies and resort to the tactics of fear by using the Internal Security Act to make arbitrary arrests." Chiam called for a national referendum on the issue.

Many of the ruling party MPs announced they would be voting for the proposal only because the party whip demanded it. Beng lamented: "I guess I will have to continue to live a schizophrenic political life — speaking against, yet voting for, a bill."

Ailine Wong even spoke for those members who had not spoken on the issue at all

when she said: "Voting is compulsory but speaking is not, I beg the first deputy prime minister [Goh] to interpret the silence of some members judiciously." Tan Cheng Bok said that it would be a "sad day for democracy" if the proposal became law only because of the PAP whip.

In the event, it did not, and when the vote was taken it was 74 for and only one against — Chiam. But Goh did make one concession to the critics by saying that the amendment may incorporate a "self-destruct" clause which will allow it to lapse after a period of four to five years if it was found not to work. The bill has now been referred to a parliamentary select committee to receive views from the public early next year before it becomes law.

The emerging factionalism beneath an enforced unity in the PAP recently has received attention both locally and abroad. An American financial publication recently downgraded the political stability rating of Singapore from A to B, which means, as pointed out by a *Straits Times* editorial, "Singapore is only politically and economically as stable as Hongkong, South Korea and pre-Tiananmen China." Another US risk-rating agency, Business Environment Risk Information, whose economic ratings are often cited approvingly by Singapore ministers, gave 80 out of 100 for political stability to Singapore in 1981, but dropped it to 77 in 1988 and 74 in 1989. It expects the index to slip to 72 by 1993.

More important than the ratings, is the fact that they are being publicised locally. Lee raised the topic in a mid-October interview given to the British newspaper the *Daily Telegraph* when he said that a strong opposition could emerge, if there was a "split in the PAP, which cannot be ruled out.

If there's a split in the leadership over policy, not a personality clash, but a real difference over economic or political policies."

The PAP remains dominant in Singapore and Lee still very much runs the party. But the rumblings of discontent, though very muted by regional standards, are increasing. They seem set to continue increasing as Lee prepares to retire formally while trying to retain paramount power informally. However, observers are beginning to doubt whether Lee's son, Trade and Industry Minister Lee Hsien Loong, will be able to take over from Goh as the future long-term prime minister as had until recently been expected. It is thought unlikely now that the younger Lee will enjoy full support from the PAP for such a move, or that Goh will give up power easily. ■



Goh: consensus.