

**WELCOME REFERENCE FOR THE CHIEF JUSTICE
ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE LAW SOCIETY OF
SINGAPORE**

May it please Your Honour, Chief Justice,

1. It is with the deepest pleasure that I, on behalf of the Bar, offer our congratulations and well wishes to Your Honour upon your well-deserved appointment as the third Chief Justice of independent Singapore.

2. Your Honour was in practice for twenty-four years. After a year in Kuala Lumpur with Bannon & Bailey, you joined Braddell Brothers in Singapore in 1963 and later moved to Shook Lin & Bok. The Bar was proud when you were elevated to the Bench in 1986. Your Honour's first stint on the Bench was distinguished not only by judicial acumen but also by equanimity of judicial temperament. Many accolades have been laid at Your Honour's feet these past few weeks. Today I would like to highlight one quality particularly cherished by all of us on this side of the Bar. It is this. As Attorney General, Your Honour did not forget the practising Bar. In advising the Government on matters of legal policy and regulation, whether concerning the entry of foreign lawyers or the disciplinary processes for the profession, Your Honour kept in mind the key role that an independent Bar plays in the functioning of the rule of law essential to our democracy.

3. The independence of the Bar is manifested by the individual espousal of causes in the courts, no matter how unpopular such causes may be, and in the collective expression of views concerning the administration of justice.

4. Addressing the Malaysian Bar in 1991, Lord Alexander of Weedon QC spoke about these twin attributes of independence. Speaking of the individual advocate's independence, he said:

'It enables the advocate to resist all pressures in an unpopular cause, and to present the case without fear or favour. Without this independence, there would be no effective rule of law and the basic duty of the advocate to protect the rights and liberties of the citizen could not be fulfilled.'

5. Turning to the role of the profession, Lord Alexander said it was important that:

'...as a profession, with a special learning, experience and perspective, we contribute to public debate and discussion on issues which affect the development of the law or procedures... In a free society, it is of the utmost importance that a professional body and its individual members should be able to comment on matters which are of public moment.'

6. In the twenty-first century, these traditional values of the profession remain as fundamental and relevant as ever.
7. While it would be wonderful if the Society's choice of issues on which to speak up were universally applauded, the fact some consider us outspoken, while others consider us reserved perhaps demonstrates that we are striking the right balance and leading the profession in a progressive and responsible way.
8. One particular challenge facing the Bar at this time, and for overcoming which we solicit Your Honour's continued support, is ensuring that the practice of law provides a satisfying and rewarding career. Technology and work procedures, in law offices and in the law courts, should lighten the load of lawyers and not become a source of stress. The Society does its part to enthuse young lawyers with love of law, and has long believed that one key to this is the encouragement of pro bono work as a professional value and habit. The profession must work hard in order to maintain its competitive edge, but quality of life and job satisfaction cannot be overlooked.
9. Before I end, I must pay tribute to Your Honour's predecessor. While he held office, there was no mountain of paper too high for him to master and no torrent of cases too strong for him to manage. The profession learned a great deal from his example.
10. I end this short welcome, Your Honour, with our pledge of support. On behalf of the Bar, I pledge our support to the work that Your Honour will undertake. We look forward to Your Honour's leadership of the administration of justice, and know that Your Honour will not forget the Bar.

Philip Jeyaretnam, S.C.
President, The Law Society of Singapore
22 April 2006

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