

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO LEE KUAN YEW'S VALUES?

We feel extremely sad that we are pushed to this position. We are disturbed by the character, conduct, motives and leadership of our brother, Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore's current prime minister and the role of his wife, Ho Ching. We have seen a completely different face to our brother, one that deeply troubles us. Since the passing of Lee Kuan Yew, on 23 March 2015, we have felt threatened by Hsien Loong's misuse of his position and influence over the Singapore government and its agencies to drive his personal agenda. We are concerned that the system has few checks and balances to prevent the abuse of government.

We feel big brother omnipresent. We fear the use of the organs of state against us and Hsien Yang's wife, Suet Fern. The situation is such that Hsien Yang feels compelled to leave Singapore:

"It is with a very heavy heart that I will leave Singapore for the foreseeable future. This is the country that my father, Lee Kuan Yew, loved and built. It has been home for my entire life. Singapore is and remains my country. I have no desire to leave. Hsien Loong is the only reason for my departure."

If Hsien Loong is prepared to act thus against us, his younger sister and brother, both contributing members of Singapore's establishment, to advance his personal agenda, we worry for Singapore. We question whether able leaders with independent political legitimacy will be side-lined to ensure Hsien Loong's grip on power remains unchallenged.

This is by no means a criticism of the Government of Singapore. We see many upright leaders of quality and integrity throughout the public service, but they are constrained by Hsien Loong's misuse of power at the very top. We do not trust Hsien Loong and have lost confidence in him.

Since Lee Kuan Yew's death, there have been changes in Singapore that do not reflect what he stood for. Nobody ever doubted that Lee Kuan Yew always held the best interests of Singapore and Singaporeans at heart. He was authentic and spoke his mind. The same cannot be said for our brother, Lee Hsien Loong and his wife, Ho Ching. We believe, unfortunately, that Hsien Loong is driven by a desire for power and personal popularity. His popularity is inextricably linked to Lee Kuan Yew's legacy. His political power is drawn from his being Lee Kuan Yew's son. We have observed that Hsien Loong and Ho Ching want to milk Lee Kuan Yew's legacy for their own political purposes. We also believe, based on our interactions, that they harbour political ambitions for their son, Li Hongyi.

Singapore has no such thing as the wife of the prime minister being a 'first lady'. Lee Kuan Yew was Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990. During those many years, his wife (our mother) consistently avoided the limelight, remaining his stalwart supporter and advisor in private. She lived discreetly, and set a high bar for the conduct of a prime minister's wife. She would never instruct Permanent Secretaries or senior civil servants. The contrast between her and Ho Ching could not be more stark. While Ho Ching holds no elected or official position in government, her influence is pervasive, and extends well beyond her job purview.

Throughout his entire life, Lee Kuan Yew's sole focus was on Singapore and its future. He was a strong opponent of monuments, particularly of himself. On suggestions that monuments or 'what-have-yous' be made for him, he replied "Remember Ozymandias". He was referring to Percy B Shelley's sonnet about the Egyptian Pharaoh with a penchant for self-aggrandising monuments. The boast etched in a plaque below his statue commanded lesser mortals to "look on my works". Only the vastness of desert sands remains: no empire, nor monuments, no great works. Lee Kuan Yew wanted none of these honours as edifices. Much more important to him was that what he had done should last.

It is for this reason that Lee Kuan Yew made clear throughout the years in public and private his wish that his home at 38 Oxley Road be demolished upon his passing. In his last Will and Testament of 17 December 2013, he again reiterated his wish and directed his three children to ensure that it be fulfilled. Indeed, his opposition to monuments was so strong that he had made clear that even if the house were gazetted (against his wishes), it should only be open to his children and their descendants.

However, we believe that Hsien Loong and Ho Ching are motivated by a desire to inherit Lee Kuan Yew's standing and reputation for themselves and their children. Whilst our father built this nation upon meritocracy, Hsien Loong, whilst purporting to espouse these values, has spoken of a "natural aristocracy". Hsien Loong and his wife, Ho Ching, have opposed Lee Kuan Yew's wish to demolish his house, even when Lee Kuan Yew was alive. Indeed, Hsien Loong and Ho Ching expressed plans to move with their family into the house as soon as possible after Lee Kuan Yew's passing. This move would have strengthened Hsien Loong's inherited mandate for himself and his family. Moreover, even if Hsien Loong did not live at 38 Oxley Road, the preservation of the house would enhance his political capital.

What has been distressing are the lengths to which Hsien Loong and Ho Ching have gone and are willing to go to get what they want.

On Hsien Loong's insistence, Lee Kuan Yew met with the Singapore Cabinet on 21 July 2011 to discuss the fate of his personal home. Wei Ling met Lee Kuan Yew on the steps of their home as he returned from that meeting. He was anguished and

despondent and told Wei Ling *"I should not have listened to Loong and gone to meet Cabinet."* He was pained that Hsien Loong, his own son, opposed his wishes in this manner.

Lee Kuan Yew believed that Hsien Loong and Ho Ching were behind what was represented to the family as a government initiative to preserve the house. In due course, Hsien Loong himself made his position clear to Lee Kuan Yew. On 3 October 2011, Lee Kuan Yew wrote: *"Loong as PM has indicated that he will declare it a heritage site."*

Lee Kuan Yew specifically inserted into his will his wish for 38 Oxley Road to be demolished so as to make it difficult for Hsien Loong to misuse the Cabinet to preserve it. He also removed Hsien Loong as an executor and trustee of his will. The wish, which was instructed to be made public as needed, was Lee Kuan Yew's direct appeal to the people of Singapore. It was his only request of them on his passing.

At the reading of Lee Kuan Yew's will, Hsien Loong was very angry that the will gave Wei Ling the right to remain living in the house and that it made clear Lee Kuan Yew's wish for its demolition immediately upon her passing or relocation. Hsien Loong threatened us and demanded our silence on our father's last wish. He wanted to assert in Parliament that Lee Kuan Yew had changed his mind, hoping to inherit the faith Singaporeans had in Lee Kuan Yew through the visible symbol of the house. We refused and fought to release our father's wish to demolish the house as instructed. We succeeded in making Lee Kuan Yew's wish public in Singapore only after the international press carried the news. Hsien Loong was therefore forced to state in Parliament that, as a son, he would like to see the wish carried out. He wanted to appear filial in public whilst acting to thwart our parents' wishes in private.

However, Hsien Loong and Ho Ching did not abandon their plans. Hsien Loong took steps to try to frustrate our publicising Lee Kuan Yew's wish. We executed a Deed of Gift in 2015 with the National Heritage Board for the donation and public exhibition of significant items from our parents' home, with a stipulation that Lee Kuan Yew's wish for the demolition of 38 Oxley Road be displayed prominently at the exhibition. However, after the gift's acceptance we soon received letters with spurious objections from Hsien Loong's then personal lawyer, Lucien Wong. Lucien Wong was made Singapore's Attorney-General in January 2017. We were shocked to see that Hsien Loong had used his position as Prime Minister to obtain a copy of the Deed of Gift from Minister Lawrence Wong, which Hsien Loong then passed to his personal lawyer to advance his personal agenda. The exhibition only proceeded months later in a diminished format after considerable struggle on our part.

In 2015, various letters were sent by Hsien Loong's then personal lawyer making accusations and misrepresentations on his behalf regarding the circumstances under

which Lee Kuan Yew's last will was executed and the inclusion of the demolition wish. These were refuted in detail by us through our lawyers. Hsien Loong knew that he could not establish his accusations in a court of law and raised no legal challenge. On the contrary, he was likely concerned that the fact that the gift of the house to him had been obtained by him through misrepresentations to our father and the family might be made public. Probate was granted on 6 October 2015 and Lee Kuan Yew's will, including the wish to demolish 38 Oxley Road, became the full, final, and legally binding word on his intentions as to his estate.

Hsien Loong initiated a settlement with us in May 2015; the Estate of Lee Kuan Yew was contemplating a challenge of the disposition of the house to him based on his misrepresentations. Hsien Loong represented that this sale of the house would give us a free hand to demolish the house. Final agreement on the settlement was reached in late 2015. Hsien Loong insisted that Hsien Yang should pay him full market value for the house (and donate an additional half the value of the house to charity). In exchange for this, we asked for and obtained a joint public statement issued by all 3 children of Lee Kuan Yew in December 2015 that we hoped that the Government would allow the demolition wish to be fulfilled and that all Singaporeans would support this cause. We also obtained an undertaking from Hsien Loong that he would recuse himself from all government decisions involving 38 Oxley Road and that, in his personal capacity, would like to see the wish honoured.

We had hoped that through this settlement, he would not hinder us from honouring our parents' wishes. However, we were disappointed that despite the settlement and Hsien Loong's undertakings, in July 2016, Minister Lawrence Wong wrote to inform us that a Ministerial Committee had been set up to consider options with respect to 38 Oxley Road and their implications. This also directly contradicted Hsien Loong's statement in Parliament in April 2015 that there was no need for the Government to take a decision in respect of 38 Oxley Road until Wei Ling no longer resided there, and that it would be up to the Government of the day to consider the matter.

Hsien Loong, despite his undertakings to recuse himself, proceeded to make extensive representations to the Committee. He is conflicted. His political power is related to being Lee Kuan Yew's son and thus he has every incentive to preserve Lee Kuan Yew's house to inherit his credibility. He also sits in a direct position of power over the Committee comprised of his subordinate ministers, thus wielding considerable influence for any outcome he desires.

Hsien Loong has asserted to the Committee that Lee Kuan Yew would "*accept any decision by the Government to preserve 38 Oxley Road.*" This play on words is not only dishonest, but nonsensical. Lee Kuan Yew accepted, as he had to, that the Government had the power to preserve 38 Oxley Road against his wishes. But this does not mean that he wanted 38 Oxley Road preserved.

In doing this, Hsien Loong has deliberately misrepresented Lee Kuan Yew's clear intentions for his own political benefit. He has also gone back on his own declarations that he would recuse himself from all Government decisions involving 38 Oxley Road and his supposed support for the demolition of the house as Lee Kuan Yew's son.

In his representations to the Committee, Hsien Loong seeks to call into question the circumstances which led to the execution of Lee Kuan Yew's last will and its inclusion of the demolition wish. He and Ho Ching are unhappy because the demolition wish gives Wei Ling an unfettered right to live in the house. These queries he raised to the Committee were already fully refuted in 2015. Except this time, of course, they are being raised to a Committee comprising Hsien Loong's subordinates.

The reality is that there was nothing suspicious or untoward at all about the execution of Lee Kuan Yew's last will. Indeed, Hsien Loong chose not to raise any legal challenge. The simple truth is that Hsien Loong's current popularity is tied to Lee Kuan Yew's legacy. Preserving Lee Kuan Yew's house would allow Hsien Loong and his family to inherit a tangible monument to Lee Kuan Yew's authority.

Lee Kuan Yew was a lawyer and well knew the sanctity and finality of a will. He gave clear instructions for the execution of the will. He carefully read his final will before signing it, and he continued to review and reflect after signing to put his affairs in order. Two weeks after executing his will, Lee Kuan Yew personally drafted unassisted a codicil to his will and executed it. All three children were kept fully apprised of the signing of the final will and the codicil. No objection was raised at that time and indeed Hsien Loong has affirmed the will in public and in private.

Ultimately, it is not difficult to see that 38 Oxley Road should be demolished. There is full alignment between Lee Kuan Yew's final wish and the people of Singapore, since there is overwhelming support among Singaporeans for the demolition of the house. An independent YouGov survey published on 22 December 2015 showed that 77% of Singaporeans supported the demolition of Lee Kuan Yew's house and only 17% opposed it.

"We are private citizens with no political ambitions. We have nothing to gain from the demolition of 38 Oxley Road, other than the knowledge that we have honoured our father's last wish. Hsien Loong has everything to gain from preserving 38 Oxley Road – he need only ignore his father's will and values."

"The values of Lee Kuan Yew are being eroded by his own son. Our father placed our country and his people first, not his personal popularity or private agendas. We are very sad that we have been pushed to this. We feel hugely uncomfortable and

closely monitored in our own country. We do not trust Hsien Loong as a brother or as a leader. We have lost confidence in him.”

Lee Wei Ling and Lee Hsien Yang
Joint Executors and Trustees of the Estate of Lee Kuan Yew
14 June 2017

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