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i say GE2006

CAN OPPOSITION DO BETTER?

LEE KHAI YANN
31, resident of Hong Kah GRC

I'M OF the opinion that Singapore needs one or two more voices from alternative parties in Parliament. But they must demonstrate the ability, balanced reasoning and character – as Gabriel Sim wished for, in his letter, “ABCs of Opposition” (May 3).

I have attended some of the Opposition rallies and was appalled – not amused – with the quality of many of the candidates. Some say they will ask hard questions if they are elected, but have they offered us the hard explanations and solutions?

Some keep blaming the PAP for not keeping the cost of living in check, without offering a clear economic solution to the problem. I do agree that our cost of living has gone up, but how do you keep a check on groceries, petrol and transport costs if the price of crude oil has risen almost three times over the last three to four years?

Would the Opposition say it can stem this rise in costs by unlocking our nation's monetary reserves to subsidise oil and transport costs?

Some may complain that the PAP Government keeps too close a tab on our

monetary reserves. But a strong reserve serves as an incredible insurance against times of global economic turmoil, during which we can utilise it to buy for our country food and oil; or in an impending health disaster such as a bird flu pandemic.

As for Opposition candidates who say we should give first priority for jobs to locals, it is often the case that locals are not willing to take up the jobs. And for many jobs that require lower skills, the foreigner is willing to accept lower pay.

All developed countries are facing this need to keep costs down, and to keep up, locals will have no choice but to be better-skilled, better-educated, and engage in higher intellect-based industries.

The PAP runs Singapore as a meritocratic society and it is the only way to go. Subsidies abound in healthcare and housing. The Progress Package paid out stands to benefit the poor more than the rich.

I myself came from a relatively poor family, but with responsible planning by my parents, living and spending within our means, and hard work and skills upgrading, my family has been able to ride out the rough times to enjoy what we have today. For that, I applaud the PAP.

The PAP runs Singapore as a meritocratic society and it is the only way to go.

OPPOSITION LIFE IS NOT EASY

PEARLY YAP
financial analyst, Jalan Besar GRC

I THINK the arguments for having a credible Opposition are clear – Singaporeans want checks and balances in our system, accountability and more transparency.

What I find curious is the amount of coverage and letters from the public decrying the lack of skills, quality and integrity of the Opposition. One wonders about those “walkover” new PAP MPs that slip through the campaign process.

While we on our high horses watch TV and criticise Opposition members, these Opposition candidates are out there speaking on behalf of Singaporeans, reflecting our frustrations.

One may question their motivations: Is it for fame, glory, money or public

service? There is no glory in Singapore politics in the Opposition camp – it is all hard work and campaign battle bruises on the personal and potentially even financial level. They face an uphill battle against the PAP with its strong election campaign machinery and the weight of resources behind them.

It is the responsibility of a Singaporean to vote carefully and wisely. It is also one's responsibility to nurture a strong nation for our future generations – and this includes a sound Opposition.

It is irrelevant whether Opposition candidates today have the credentials to be a Minister but given time, Opposition members will grow and become better at being an alternative voice. I thank the Opposition members for their energy, self-sacrifice and passion. You are made of higher mettle than us, the common folk.

The Opposition faces an uphill battle against the PAP with its strong election campaign machinery.