

[« Return to article](#)[Print this](#)

The Straits Times

www.straitstimes.com

Published on Mar 28, 2015

Reaffirm our founding ideals

THURSDAY'S editorial ("Staying true to convictions") noted that some have questioned the present relevance of "conviction politicians" today.

Faced with a more educated, empowered and expressive electorate, politicians today find it increasingly impossible to rule with an iron fist.

In a crowded and clamorous marketplace of competing ideas, political survival appears to depend on how conciliatory one is.

The pitfall of democracy is the high likelihood for demagogues to emerge.

Rabble-rousing politics, with their typical shoddy and myopic public policies pandering to populist sentiments, are harbingers of a nation's downfall.

More often than not, populist policies are knee-jerk reactions - emotional responses that lack rational thought.

Thus, I agree with the editorial that "unswerving commitment to fundamental principles" is "all the more relevant in a modern polity".

In a period of polarising politics, it is all the more critical that a "conviction politician" rises among the crowd of fawning "consensus politicians".

While a conviction politician connotes confrontation, he could, instead, be conciliatory.

In fact, the most conciliatory approach is not achieving consensus but respecting the individual's free will.

Usually, compromises are made in achieving consensus - and such compromises are commonly subject to the tyranny of the majority.

The editorial added that "many would hope that Singapore always stays firm in its convictions and beliefs in the founding ideals that Mr Lee (Kuan Yew) championed".

As we mourn the death of our founding father, celebrate the nation's golden jubilee and chart our future, let us revisit and reaffirm the principles set out in The Proclamation of Singapore, which Mr Lee signed on Aug 9, 1965.

The Proclamation of Singapore began with "Whereas it is the inalienable right of a people to be free and independent" and closed with "Singapore shall forever be a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society".

A monument bearing the text of the Proclamation of Singapore stands in Parliament House today.

I hope our Members of Parliament, and, indeed, all citizens, take it upon themselves to stay true to the founding ideals of our nation.

Bryan Kwa Jie Wen

Copyright © 2015 Singapore Press Holdings. All rights reserved.