

**SPEECH BY THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE MALCOLM MACDONALD  
AT THE OCBC CENTRE INAUGURATION, 1.10.76**

On behalf of all your guests I thank you warmly for your very friendly words of welcome. We are delighted to be in this vast hall in this monolithic building on this stupendous occasion – the Inauguration of the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Centre.

We listened with fascination to what the Chairman said about its construction. In his remarks he rightly paid high tribute to the architect, the builders and various others who have helped to create this giant of a sky-scraper. But he omitted to mention a vital contributor to this amazing project.

When the OCBC first came into being during the world-wide economic depression in 1932 a young man named Tan Chin Tuan was appointed its Secretary and Assistant Manager. Throughout the succeeding 44 years he has played a brilliant part in guiding and leading the OCBC to its present eminent position in the banking world.

He is indeed the principal architect and builder of the banking colossus which now inhabits this tower. Incidentally the building's 52 storeys help to celebrate the 52 years through which he has actually been associated with overseas Chinese Banking.

I am not qualified to describe with erudition his and his colleagues' great professional achievements. I am an ignoramus on all economic affairs. The appalling size of my overdraft in my personal bank account in England is an indication of my stupidity in matters financial.

But I do not need to tell this audience about the high importance which the OCBC has attained both inside and outside Singapore. I will only say that the Corporation has made a huge contribution to transforming Singapore from the economically dependent little colony that it was less than 20 years ago into the prosperously independent, internationally influential nation that it is today.

The erection of this building – which cost \$100,000,000 – is one mark of the Corporation's confidence in the strong future of Singapore

Often when I think of the Republic of Singapore my mind flies back to the famous city states of ancient Greece, such as Athens, Corinth and Sparta. They are deservedly some of the most admired political states in human history. In some ways Singapore is reminiscent of them.

There are various reasons for the similarity: Singapore's small geographical size, the great abilities of its people, and the outstanding competence of its Government are some of them. Another is its up-to-date culture. When I first came to Singapore 30 years ago it was notorious all round the world as "a cultural desert". Those days are over! Of course, Singapore's aesthetic arts appear very different from those of the Greek cities of 3,000 years ago. Its style of architecture, for example, is in sharp contrast to that of Athens.

The beautiful single-storey Parthenon, temple on the Acropolis, in Athens is a tiny pigmy beside this giant skyscraper in Singapore. Yet the two buildings share a common distinction.

The Parthenon is one of the loveliest examples of ancient classical architecture: and this OCBC Centre is not only the tallest building in South-East Asia, but also one of the handsomest examples of modern architecture to be seen anywhere round the world.

Mr. Chairman, we congratulate you and your colleagues on this great architectural achievement following on your successes in many financial, economic, educational and other fields. Long may the OCBC continue to flourish in peaceful, happy Singapore.