

Mr Lee Kuan Yew talks about WP MP in latest book

Good credentials, but disappointing in Parliament

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HE HAS “not turned out to be so brilliant”.

That’s what former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew said about Workers’ Party (WP) Member of Parliament Chen Show Mao (above).

This line can be found in his latest 400-page book *One Man’s View Of The World*.

In the chapter on Singapore, Mr Lee reflected that “at least two factors worked significantly to the PAP’s detriment” in the 2011 General Elections.

The fact that the WP was able to produce a star candidate, former top lawyer Chen, was mentioned as one of the reasons.

Mr Lee, however, said in his book that Mr Chen disappointed in Parliament despite having stellar credentials. (See excerpt on right.)

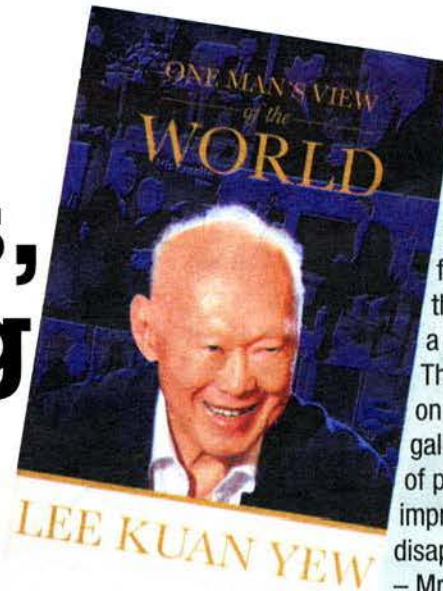
He added that while Mr Chen had well-written prepared speeches, he is “all over the place” when it comes to follow-up questions.

In an e-mail reply to The New Paper, Mr Chen said he hasn’t read the book, adding that it is “after all, but one man’s view”.

“The growth of parliamentary opposition is unprecedented in our recent history. What we have done, first and foremost, is to grow from two WP MPs in the last Parliament to nine in this Parliament. We have worked hard to ground our parliamentary participation in the reality that is Singaporeans’ everyday lives and hopes.

“(Mr Lee) is entitled to his views but we remain steadfast in our commitment to doing our part for a First World Parliament. Singapore deserves no less – the diversity of many Singaporeans’ Views of the World (sic).”

Mr Chen, 52, who is an MP in Aljunied GRC, joined the party in 2007. He returned to the country for good, months before contesting in the 2011 elections.



“Chen, however, has not turned out to be so brilliant. In Parliament, he makes good prepared speeches, with a written script, but in the follow-up, he is all over the place. It simply does not gel for him. If he has a keen mind that has thought through the subjects deeply, he certainly has done a good job of concealing it in his performances. This is not just my view. The journalists reporting on political news, and voters sitting in the public gallery may have felt the same way. The weight of public expectation of the man, given his rather impressive resume, has probably added to the disappointment.”

– Mr Lee Kuan Yew on WP MP Chen Show Mao

Last based in Beijing, he was the managing partner of New York law firm Davis Polk & Wardwell.

The Taiwan-born Singaporean, who left the country in 1982, graduated from elite universities such as Oxford, Harvard and Stanford.

Not too fixated

Political analyst Eugene Tan said voters are not too fixated with Mr Chen’s performance in Parliament.

“Currently, voters are more focused on their constituency work, rather than their parliamentary work.

“They (voters) also recognise that there are only seven elected opposition (members) in Parliament and they constitute a

valuable, if not limited impact,” said the Associate Professor of Law at Singapore Management University.

In his book, Mr Lee highlighted his party’s new candidates, five of whom are now in the Cabinet.

In particular, he singled out Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, whom he described as “the best Principal Private Secretary I ever had”.

“The only pity is that he is not of a big bulk, which makes a difference in a mass rally. But he has one of the finest minds among the civil servants I have worked with.”

One Man’s View Of The World is available at all leading bookstores for \$39.90 (inclusive of GST).