

M. M. 13 MAR 1972  
DR. MAHATHIR

who returned to the Umno fold recently, is already engaged in a verbal battle with another Umno stalwart.

The Utusan Zaman yesterday published a reply by the erstwhile Umno "rebel" replying to an earlier statement by Tan Sri Ja'afar Albar published in the Utusan Melayu in which he offered to resign as a member of the Umno Executive Council, "so that Dr. Mahathir can be given every opportunity to serve the Umno and take an active part in the nation's politics."

"I am also prepared to withdraw from membership of all Umno committees for Dr. Mahathir," Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar said.

Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar, who is Member Parliament for Johore Tenggara, made the statement "after reading a press statement by Dr. Mahathir expressing his earnest desire to serve in any committee or bureau set up by the party."

Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar said that he hoped his suggestion to resign from the highest body of the party "would be accepted with an open mind by all concerned"

"It is better that I sacrifice my position in the party to give a chance to a much younger man," he said.

Pointing out that the Umno annual general conference will be held in June and that Dr. Mahathir will contest for a post in the Umno Executive Council, Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar said:-

"It would be better that he should be given the opportunity now so that he can adjust himself to Umno members with whom he has been separated for the past two years."

Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar Albar is a member of the Umno Religious Bureau, the Umno Labour Bureau, the Umno Publicity Bureau and is also a member of the Umno Disciplinary Committee headed by the Tun (Dr) Ismail

Dr. Mahathir's immediate reply to Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar's statement showed that he did not accept the offer in the spirit it was made.

His return to the Umno, Dr. Mahathir said, should not impel Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar to withdraw from the Umno Executive Council.

"I don't think," Dr. Mahathir said, "that if I am accepted as a member of any Umno Bureau, Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar should withdraw from its membership."

Whether he will take an active role in Umno now or after the Umno annual general conference in June "is left to the party to decide," he added.

My return to Umno should not impel Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar to with-

draw. Whether I will be a member of the Umno Executive Council or not depends on the Umno annual general conference," said Dr. Mahathir.

He said that "it does not mean that when one member is elected to the Umno Executive Council, another member should withdraw.

"If Umno members are satisfied with one's service, he will surely be re-elected. The suggestion to resign does not arise at all and is entirely misplaced," Dr. Mahathir told the Utusan Zaman.

He said that membership of each bureau is not "restricted".

"Even non-party members are accepted if necessary", Dr. Mahathir said and added: "But if the Umno Constitution restricts the membership of the bureaus, then I will wait for the Umno annual general assembly."

The former Umno Youth leader said that Tan Sri Syed Ja'afar's suggestion to resign from membership of the Umno Executive Council "is his own."

"It should not be conditional on the possibility whether I will be elected as a member of the Umno Executive Council or not," he said.

Dr. Mahathir added that although he has been "separated from Umno" for two years, "I have been in close touch with the Umno rank and file."