

# 'Directive brought some change in British attitude'

From HARDEV KAUR in SUVA, Fiji 16 OCT 1982

THE "buy British last" directive to all government departments and agencies will continue until there is a definite change in attitude on the part of the British.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told a Press conference here yesterday that there was some change in their attitude since the directive last October. "But we still don't buy British if we can help."

The Prime Minister added that while the implementation of the directive was becoming more difficult it would continue to be imposed.

British goods, he said, had become more competitive since the directive as the British pound, much stronger last October, had since dropped its value vis-a-vis the Malaysian ringgit. British goods have thus become cheaper and therefore more competitive.

Dr Mahathir said that

the two countries continued to talk to each other. "We have a High Commission in London while the British government has a High Commission in Kuala Lumpur."

Asked what he thought of the proposal by the New Zealand Prime Minister for global negotiations along the lines of Bretton Woods with a view to solving the world's problems, Dr Mahathir said that he did not agree with it.

This was because at the time when Bretton Woods was held in 1944 most of the countries that negotiated then had control over trade and as such could implement the decisions arrived at.

But today, Dr Mahathir pointed out, the situation has changed. Where countries supported free trade, "free trade today only applied to where some of them traded."

The solution, he said,

would be for the developed nations to re-think their role in world trade. They should be willing to accept the fact that areas in which they were no longer efficient as producers should be left to others.

Answering a question, he said, since Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) the preferences it accorded to some of Malaysia's goods such as rubber had been removed.

Dr Mahathir had said earlier in the day that "it was indeed unfortunate that this state of affairs (in the Commonwealth) had come about ironically as a result of the actions or inactions of the prime movers of the Commonwealth themselves."

Asked to identify the "prime movers" he said he believed that Britain was the prime mover.