

15/07/1983

(P) Mahathir Mohd.

Q: AS WE ALL KNOW, UMNO IS THE STRONGEST PARTY IN THE COUNTRY AND THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO IT. STRONG AS IT MAY SEEM, THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE PARTY IS REALLY WORRISOME. THINGS LIKE FACTIONALISM WITHIN UMNO AND EVEN WITHIN OTHER BARISAN NASIONAL COMPONENTS HAVE SPREAD EVEN TO THE GRASSROOTS. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT WE CAN DO, I MEAN THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP, TO OVERCOME THIS?

A: I DON'T THINK THE PROBLEM IS AS BIG AS YOU MAKE OUT. BUT YOU -- THE PRESS -- I THINK, IS BEGINNING TO BELIEVE ITS OWN REPORTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WERE REPORTS THAT SO AND SO IS NOT ON TALKING TERMS WITH SO AND SO AND THIS IS NOT TRUE AT ALL. PEOPLE MAKE ALL KINDS OF INTERPRETATIONS ... IS HE SITTING NEXT TO THE OTHER FELLOW OR NOT? IS HE CLOSE, HOW CLOSE IS THE CLOSENESS AND ALL THESE THINGS ARE BEING COUNTED NOW. YOU ARE FINDING SIGNS WHERE THERE ARE NO SIGNS. ACTUALLY THERE IS A PROBLEM: WE ADMIT THERE IS A PROBLEM BUT THIS PROBLEM IS NOT INSOLUBLE. I BELIEVE THAT UMNO ESPECIALLY IS LED BY PEOPLE WHO ARE QUITE REASONABLE. THEY WOULD NOT WANT TO BREAK UP THE PARTY. BUT OF COURSE, THEY ARE SOMETIMES CARRIED AWAY BY THE URGINGS OF THEIR SUPPORTERS WHO ALWAYS LIKE TO SEE A GOOD FIGHT. LIKE IN FOOTBALL, THE SHOUTING IN THE STANDS IS MUCH LOUDER THAN THE FIGHT ON THE FIELD. SO YOU FIND PEOPLE WHO ARE QUITE ACTIVE BUT I'VE WARNED THEM THAT WHATEVER THEY DO, THEY ARE NOT GOING TO DISRUPT THE PARTY. THEY ARE NOT GOING TO SPLIT THE PARTY. -- MORE 0830/MB

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I THINK THIS HINT THAT I MADE IS WELL TAKEN. I THINK THERE ARE ALREADY INDICATIONS OF A CALMING DOWN.

Q: BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, DATUK, THERE WERE INTERPRETATIONS FROM SOME OTHER FACTIONS THAT WHAT YOU MEANT WAS THAT YOU DID NOT WANT PEOPLE TO SUPPORT A CERTAIN FACTION WHILE ANOTHER FACTION SAID JUST THE OPPOSITE.

A: PRECISELY, BOTH ARE INTERPRETING IN THEIR OWN WAY, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE THEY WANT TO ENSURE THAT THEY WIN IN THE END. WHATEVER I SAID, THEY CAN INTERPRET IN WHATEVER THEY LIKE. BUT I THINK THE RANK AND FILE IN UMNO KNOWS WHAT I MEANT.

Q: DATUK, DO YOU THINK THE RANKS HAVE REALLY CLOSED? I THOUGHT THE EFFECT OF THE LAST UMNO ELECTION IS STILL BEING FELT?

A: ONLY BY A SMALL FRACTION OF THE PARTY. THE REST ARE JUST NOT INVOLVED.

Q: DATUK, HAVING SAID THAT SUPPORTERS ALWAYS LIKE A GOOD FIGHT, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SAY THAT SUPPORTERS WILL NOT BE DOING THE THINGS THEY DO AND SAYING THE THINGS THEY SAY WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THEIR FACTION LEADER.

A: WELL, IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO SAY WHO IS PUSHING WHOM: WHETHER THE LEADERS ARE PUSHING THE SUPPORTERS OR WHETHER THE SUPPORTERS ARE PUSHING THE LEADERS. BUT NORMALLY LEADERS -- NORMAL ONES NOT THE ABNORMAL ONES -- LIKE TO RESPOND TO THEIR OWN SUPPORTERS. -- MORE 0834/MB

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TO BE NEGATIVE TO YOUR SUPPORTERS IS TO DO DAMAGE TO YOURSELF. THAT'S WHY I GAVE MY WARNING TO THE LIEUTENANTS. THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE MORE ANXIOUS THAN THE COMBATANTS. THE GENERALS ARE NOT AT ALL ANXIOUS BUT THE LIEUTENANTS ARE. THEY THINK THAT IF THE GENERALS GO UP, THEY CAN GO ONE STEP TOO. THIS HAPPENS ALL THE TIME, EVERYBODY WANT THEIR CANDIDATE TO WIN SO THAT THEY CAN LIVE UNDER THEIR SHADOW.

Q: DATUK, YOU MADE A VERY IMPORTANT STATEMENT JUST NOW, SAYING THAT WOUNDS HAVE ALMOST HEALED. THIS IS WHAT EVERYONE WANT TO HEAR. WHAT EVIDENCE DO YOU HAVE THAT THIS IS REALLY SO?

A: THE FEELING IS NOT GONE COMPLETELY. THE FEELING IS THERE OF COURSE BUT CERTAINLY THE DEGREE IS LESS THAN BEFORE. I HAVE MY OWN SOURCES OF INFORMATION APART FROM THE PRESS OF COURSE AND I BELIEVE THAT MY JUDGMENT IS QUITE CORRECT.

Q: DATUK, CAN WE GO ON TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE BARISAN? IT IS FELT THAT CERTAIN PRINCIPLES WITHIN THE BARISAN ARE BEING IGNORED BY CERTAIN COMPONENT PARTIES. WE SEE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT IN THE LAST ELECTION, BERJAYA FIELDED SEVERAL OF ITS SUPPORTERS TO CONTEST AS INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES AGAINST USNO NOMINEES WHO WERE STANDING ON THE BARISAN TICKET. -- MORE 0836/MB

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SOME OF THESE INDEPENDENTS WON THE ELECTION AND ARE SEATED AS INDEPENDENT MPS IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT. BUT YET WE FIND SOME OF THEM, THERE IS FOR EXAMPLE ONE, WHO, WHILE IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT IS AN INDEPENDENT MP IN BERJAYA HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BERJAYA YOUTH MOVEMENT. IS THIS NOT SOMETHING ODD? HOW DO YOU RECONCILE THIS?

A: WELL, WE WILL TRY OUR BEST OF COURSE BUT WE HAVE NO MEANS OF FORCING THE ISSUE. THE MAIN THING IS THAT THE PEOPLE OF SABAH HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT THEY WANT. IF THEY REALLY PREFER THE BN CANDIDATE, THE OFFICIAL BN CANDIDATE, THEY SHOULD VOTE FOR HIM, THAT MAKES THINGS EASIER FOR ME. BUT OBVIOUSLY, THEY DO NOT WANT THE PARTICULAR BN CANDIDATE AND THAT'S WHY THE INDEPENDENTS WON. DO WE HAVE TO IGNORE THIS? WE ARE REALLY IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION WHEREBY WE CANNOT ACCEPT THEM AND AT THE SAME TIME WE CANNOT IGNORE THEM. SO THE SITUATION IS MOST UNSATISFACTORY AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED. BUT THERE'S NOTHING MUCH I CAN DO EXCEPT WHAT HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE. THE REST IS UP TO THE PEOPLE OF SABAH.

Q: DATUK, HOW DO YOU REACT TO THE RECENT STATEMENTS FROM GERAKAN PERTAINING TO SOMETHING AKIN TO THE MALAYSIAN MALAYSIA CONCEPT, EMPHASIZING THE NEED TO HAVE THE MALAYSIAN SENSE OF UNITY, MALAYSIAN SENSE OF THIS AND MALAYSIAN SENSE OF THAT? ON TOP OF THAT THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN TALKS ABOUT GERAKAN WANTING TO MERGE WITH THE MCA. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THESE?

A: I SEE NO HARM IN THE MALAYSIAN UNITY, THAT'S WHAT WE ARE ALL FOR. IF GERAKAN THINKS SO, THEN THEY ARE IN CONFORMITY WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S GENERAL STAND. BUT OF COURSE IF THEY DECIDE TO JOIN WITH THE MCA THAT IS ANOTHER THING WHICH BEGINS TO SHOW A BIT OF CONFUSION. ON ONE HAND THEY WANT TO BE MALAYSIAN MALAYSIAN AND ON THE OTHER THEY WANT TO BE CHINESE MALAYSIAN. SO THEY WILL HAVE TO DECIDE WHAT IT IS THAT THEY WANT. WE ARE ALL FOR MALAYSIAN UNITY AND IT IS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MALAYSIAN UNITY THAT WE HAVE ALL OUR POLICIES.

Q: WELL, HAVING SAID SO WHY IS UMNO A MALAY PARTY ONLY?

A: WELL, THE SAME QUESTION CAN BE DIRECTED TO OTHER PARTIES. WE BELIEVE THAT THE COMPONENT PARTIES CAN REPRESENT THE COMMUNITY BUT WE MUST LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER. -- BERNAMA
0830/MB