

SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE AT THE OPEN-
ING OF THE SECOND ANNUAL DELEGATES
CONFERENCE OF THE FEDERATION ARMED
FORCES CIVILIAN STAFF UNION, AT FEDERAL
HOUSE, KUALA LUMPUR ON 2ND SEPTEMBER,
1961

Mr President, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very glad to have this opportunity to address you on the occasion of your Second Annual Delegates' Conference today.

In my capacity as Minister of Defence I have very frequent occasions to meet the military members of our Army, Navy and Air Force but I am afraid that I have less occasion to meet the civilians who work within the Armed Forces and within my Defence Ministry.

In our present time of development and activity it is only natural that there should be frequent occasions for me to address the military members of the Armed Forces or to be present at official occasions in which they are taking part since, for example, in the last year alone the Armed Forces have been continuously in the public eye.

You are all aware of the very fine reputation which the Malayan Special Force has won while serving in the Congo and I have been proud to be present when members of the Malayan Special Force departed for the Congo and when the first Detachment returned.

The Federation Army has also been in the public eye on many ceremonial occasions and in addition the purchase and delivery of new aircraft for the Royal Malayan Air Force and of a new ship for the Royal Malayan Navy has also produced publicity for our Armed Forces as a whole.

I doubt whether when any of these military activities were witnessed or discussed any mention was given to the many civilians working behind the scenes and I think it is possible that little

thought was given to them also. Perhaps that is as it should be for civilians on the whole tend to remain conscientiously in the background when the Armed Forces are the subject of display.

However, as Minister of Defence I know only too well the magnificent efforts which have been put forward by the civilians working with the Armed Forces and I know also that the military members of the Armed Forces appreciate these efforts equally well.

When the Federation Government decided to send troops to the assistance of the United Nations in the Congo, members of the Federation Armed Forces Civilian Staff Union showed their immediate support by volunteering also to serve, if required, in the Congo. In the event this offer of civilian assistance had to be declined but nevertheless it was true indication of the spirit of the whole civilian staff of the Federation Armed Forces.

Although civilians did not go to Congo nevertheless the commitment to the United Nations did put a heavy burden upon the Ministry of Defence and the military units in Malaya, and I have been informed time and again of the extremely hard work and long hours carried out by civilians in the Armed Forces in order to ensure that the dispatch of men and stores to the Congo was carried out without hitch.

The Congo commitment is, of course, but one of the ways in which the civilian staff has shown its loyalty and its industry and many other examples could be quoted in similar vein and I wish straightaway now as Minister of Defence that I greatly appreciate this loyalty and industry.

I believe that although this is only your second Annual Delegates' Conference, 1961 does in fact mark the tenth Anniversary of the formation of your Civilian Staff Union. I wish to congratulate you on achieving this tenth Anniversary and I also wish to congratulate you upon the organisation which you have steadily built up in those ten years and upon the fine spirit which has been instilled in the civilian staff, largely, I do not doubt, as a result of the Union's activities.

Doubtless during your ten-year existence you have had your ups and downs but I believe that at the present time your Union is in a healthier and stronger position than ever before and in

accordance with the declared policy of the Federation Government to promote trade unionism I feel confident that your Union will achieve even greater success in the future.

I understand that certain of the subjects upon which the Union has made representation in recent months have not yet been brought to a satisfactory conclusion and I do not doubt that in some matters members of the Union have felt disappointed at certain delays. Doubtless the excuse of pressure of work arising from heavy commitments in the Ministry of Defence has been used rather too frequently to your liking but I would ask you to appreciate that during the last year the Congo commitment together with the present development of the Armed Forces and the new tasks such as the raising of a Brunei Malay Regiment have all put a very heavy burden upon the senior officials in the Ministry of Defence as well as upon the members of the Armed Forces as a whole.

One of the subjects upon which there has been considerable delay, I understand, is the establishment of a Working Party to assess the proper proportion of civil personnel as related to military personnel in the Ministry of Defence and in Unit establishments in the Armed Forces. This is a large task and I appreciate the need for such a Working Party since it is essential to have a balanced military and civil structure in order that both efficiency and harmony may be maintained and in order that a proper career structure may exist in both military and civil services.

Such a task is not a small one and in fact it took well over a year for a Working party to examine the organisation of the Ministry of Defence alone but I am assured that early attention will be given to this Working Party in order that the proper division of posts between civil and military personnel may be calculated in the near future.

I do not doubt that there are other subjects which you will be discussing at this Delegates' Conference and upon which I shall be kept informed by my officers—matters such as housing, permanent employment and schemes of service and all matters which have a profound effect upon the happiness and well-being of all employees. I hope that all such outstanding matters will be settled as early as possible although, of course, I cannot guarantee that they will be settled to the full extent of your wishes since as in all such cases there are two sides to be considered.

I am also informed that Departmental Whitley Council in the Ministry of Defence should be functioning again in the very near future after a lapse of some years and I am very pleased to hear that this form of negotiation will shortly resume. In the meantime, I know that the officers of your Union have served you extremely well in negotiations with the Secretary of Defence and his staff at the monthly meetings which have been held for the past year.

In so far as the administration of the civilian staff is concerned I am hopeful that more attention will be able to be given to this subject from the beginning of next year since it is hoped to transfer responsibility for such administration to a new Principal Assistant Secretary and away from the Finance Branch which has been so busy with financial matters that it has not always been able to give the necessary time required to civilian staff matters.

Before I close this address I would like to express on behalf of the Federation Government, my colleagues and myself, our appreciation of your willing and hard work in the past and I hope that the next ten years will see you with as great a progress as you have made in the past. I hope also that this Annual Delegates' Conference will be a regular feature and that I shall have further opportunities to meet you and address you at such Conferences in the future.

I wish this particular Conference great success and I now have great pleasure in declaring your Delegates' Conference open.