

ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF RURAL
DEVELOPMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE
CONFERENCE OF CHIEF SURVEYORS IN
KUALA LUMPUR ON 25TH SEPTEMBER,
1962

It is more than two and a half years since last I addressed you at your Conference. At that time, this Ministry of Rural Development was only very new and the machinery for giving effect to government's policy to improve the lot of Rural dwellers had not been properly set up. On that occasion the Surveyor-General of New Zealand was on a visit to the Federation to see for himself how his Government could help us in our Rural Development drive and, as you all know, the result of this was the splendid gesture of making twelve Surveyors available to the Federation under the Colombo Plan. These twelve Surveyors have been here more than one and the half years now and have been employed on Rural Development projects throughout the Federation in co-operation with your own staff.

I am very well aware of your staffing problems. To meet the shortage of Division I officers arrangements are being made now to recruit five contract officers from Australia or New Zealand. Furthermore, it is hoped that some at least of the Colombo Plan Surveyors now serving in the Federation will stay on for an extended tour of duty.

Only now has the drive to recruit the 250 new Technicians whose recruitment was referred to at the last Conference been completed. The demands on you have been increasing all the time and I am grateful for the loyalty and the energy with which these demands have been met. As these new Technicians have been absorbed and trained your departmental potential has been increasing. The demands are going to increase still further and I hope that you will be able to continue to meet them as you have done hitherto.

I have stressed again and again my conviction that it is vitally important for all of us to get out on the ground and I have tried to set an example in this regard myself. It is essential that every Chief Surveyor should go out on the ground on every

major Rural Development project in his State so that he may know at first hand just what progress has been made and where delays are likely to arise so that they may be avoided. It is this personal interest by senior officers which will insure that momentum is not lost.

Coming as you do from all over the Federation you will have problems peculiar to your own individual spheres of activity. It would be idle to pretend that there have been no misunderstanding in the past and I know that your Department has suffered from time to time quite a deal of frustration and irritation in that there have been seeming changes of plan and inconsistency in policy from place to place. I know very well that it has always been your cry that every change of mind may well result in the abandonment of schemes already surveyed or their modification in a manner very costly in survey effort. I assure you that I have taken this up very strongly and I think I can assure you that you should have very little further complaint in this connection. Your co-operation on the spot with those who, like you are committed to the furtherance of policy is essential but if this seems to fail and you find yourself being asked to do what you feel professionally to be wrong or unnecessary, you must pass this information on without delay and, if necessary, it will be brought to my personal attention so that matters can be put right.

I have been grateful for your loyal support and when you return to your respective States I should appreciate it if it were made known to all those that I do not merely take for granted the efforts of your staff. Greater efforts have been demanded of all of you and there is no prospect of less being expected for a long time to come if our goals are to be reached.

I do not propose to take up any more of your time. I know you have a long Agenda to deal with at this Conference and I hope that these discussions of yours will result in further increases in your Department's efficiency on all fronts. I wish you a profitable Conference.