

Speech given on the Annual Installation
Dinner of Kuala Lumpur Rotary Club,
28th June, 1960.

Mr. President, Mr. Ex-President, Your Highnesses,
the Hon'ble the Prime Minister, the Hon'ble the
Mentri Besar, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Living as we do in a democracy, we are frequently reminded in terms which are usually both voluble and vehement, that we must always safeguard free speech and the freedom of the Press. After listening to the very pleasant speech made by Rotarian Hutton about the guests of honour this evening it occurs to me there is one argument for these two freedoms I have never heard said before. And that argument is this. If we did not have these freedoms, we would miss a considerable amount of wit and humour.

Mr. Hutton may defend his right to dip his editorial pen in acid if he feels so inclined, and there is no one here who would wish to deny him that privilege; but I am sure we all appreciate his ability this evening to sip the champagne of cordiality in his compliments.

Tonight I am asked to reply to his toast of "The Guests". I consider it an honour and privilege to do so. However, I am faced with some constitutional difficulty. Although I am a Minister of the Federal Government, I have to reply on behalf of His Highness the Regent of this State and his Mentri Besar. Also I believe I have somewhat unusual and unconstitutional responsibility for a Minister to reply on behalf of his own Prime Minister.

No difficulty arises in replying to Mr. Hutton himself. As Deputy Prime Minister, or Minister of Defence, or Minister of Rural Development I frequently have to reply to him, as he is usually asking me questions about my jobs. I don't think he manages to catch me at a disadvantage very often.

But with my constitutional difficulty I am not so sure tonight. Mr. Hutton hasn't been asking me questions, he has been making statements about the guests, including myself. He doesn't have any constitutional difficulties. I cannot take refuge in saying "No comment"; if I did I wouldn't have any speech to make. Modesty forbids me either to confirm or to deny anything he has said about me. And I am the last person who would wish to contradict anything he has said about the other distinguished guests.

So I propose to find my way out of this impasse in protocol in this way. Let me say that most of the guests happen to be Honorary Rotarians, so after listening to him, and bearing in mind my constitutional difficulty. I will say, and correctly, that all your guests tonight have been upgraded. We are no longer "Honorary"; we are also "Honoured".

Nor must I forget the ladies. I feel I have some right to speak on behalf of my own wife but I do not think I have any right - and she would probably be the first to remind me I haven't - to speak on behalf of the other ladies. However, I think I can safely say that all the ladies present are very pleased indeed about the kind things Mr. Hutton has had to say tonight.

Of course, Mr. Hutton is not speaking for himself alone, but on behalf of the Rotary Club of Kuala Lumpur. On behalf of all the guests, therefore, I would like to thank him and you most sincerely for your warm and friendly tributes,

and also for the welcome opportunity to be present at this Annual Installation Dinner.

This annual function can be described as New Year's Day for Rotary. Or should I perhaps say New Year's Eve? The symbol of Rotary is a wheel, not an ordinary wheel, but one with cogs. Once a year it stops turning for a few hours, not for maintenance and repair, but for oiling and lubrication (and I do not mean what you are thinking). It stops to gear itself to the acceleration of new ideas and new drive by new governors. And as it whirs into action again, driving the Rotary machine, it keeps humming to all the component parts a constant reminder -service before self - service before self - Service before self.

This is the motto of Rotary, but it is well to remind ourselves that Rotary does not have, or should not have, a monopoly of it. I say so particularly because in the gigantic task of rural development in which we are engaged today the whole nation is being asked, especially in the country areas, to put service before self. I am confident that if we all go ahead together in the spirit of this motto, if we co-operate and work hard together, we in Malaya will be surrounded by a bright horizon of better living and opportunities for all.

Service before self is the spirit of Rotary, this is its true test of worth. If a Rotary Club does not make a continuous impact on the community it serves, if the community is not constantly aware of its capacity for goodwill and good works, then there is something wrong with the machine. Those of us who are not members of Rotary, the general public that is, are probably in a better position to know the worth of a local Rotary Club than its members are.

I can fairly say that the Kuala Lumpur Rotary Club has a good record indeed in setting example and getting achievement, and I hope all your members, big wheels and small, will continue to go round in happy co-operation turning out more and better products for the community, the products we associate with Rotary - giving personal service and raising cash for good causes.

There is one more comment I would like to make on Mr. Hutton's toast.

(Extemporise on his remarks about the feelings of expatriates in Malaya for Malaya)

Mr. President, on behalf of all the guests I wish the members of the Kuala Lumpur Rotary Club a very progressive, successful and eventful year under your leadership, in fact I hope that when the next Annual Installation Dinner comes round, you and all the members of the Club will be able to say that it was the best year yet.

Thank you once again for your courtesy and hospitality throughout this most enjoyable evening.

Kuala Lumpur,
28th June, 1960.