

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, AT THE DINNER OF MALAYSIAN EMPLOYERS CONSULTATIVE ASSOCIATION AT THE LAKE CLUB, KUALA LUMPUR ON 12TH APRIL, 1973

Y.B. Senator Datuk Ubaidullah,<sup>1</sup> Fellow Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very much honoured to be here this evening on the occasion of your annual dinner. I would like to thank you and your Committee for this opportunity to meet members of MECA in the congenial atmosphere of this Club which I am sure is very familiar to us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your organisation albeit small, holds an important place in our national life, and, in particular, I think it can play a vital role in the context of our current industrialisation programme.

I am happy and grateful that members of MECA are serving on various Councils and Boards appointed by Government and, to quote one specific case, in the National Advisory Council on Industrial Training, there are as many as 12 MECA representatives out of twenty nominees from the private sector. In a way, this would guarantee that the certificates issued by the Certification Board (on which there are 3 MECA representatives) will be honoured by Employers. Incidentally, I have asked the Ministry of Labour and Manpower to speed up the setting of syllabuses and standard for these trainings so that certificates to be issued would be acceptable to both Government and private sector.

I also recall the pleasant meeting I had with MECA representatives last December during which we had a very useful exchange of views on the state of industrial relations.

Admittedly, the situation in 1972 was one which caused considerable concern to us in the Government. After all, you will agree that Government is by far the biggest employer in the country, but we have our own way of accommodating the demands from our Government unions in the CUEPACS or IMG.

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<sup>1</sup> Timbalan Yang Dipertua Dewan Negara.

I am, therefore, glad to note that MECA has successfully concluded collective agreements which benefited several thousand employees. Over and above this, it is also important, I think, for employers to maintain closer human relations with their workers particularly in relatively smaller enterprises so as to maintain an efficient production line. There are several ways of doing this and one way is by seeking the workers' views.

Talking of workers' views, however, reminds me of a joke which I am sure is not unfamiliar to some of you. It's about a factory boss who had spent a great deal of money to ensure that his employees should work under the best of conditions.

One day, he assembled all his workers and said, "Folks, whenever I enter the workshop, I want to see everyone cheerfully performing his task. Therefore, I invite you to place in this box any further suggestion as to how this can be brought about". A week later, he opened the box and found only one slip of paper with this message "Don't wear rubber heels".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely appreciate the Chairman's expression of faith and confidence in the Government as well as your pledge for continued support to what the Government is doing in the context of the Second Malaysia Plan.

As I have said on some other occasions, our future well being as a Nation depends on the rapid progress in achieving the objectives of the New Economic Policy, specifically the restructuring of our society.

I am happy to note that the visits I made to Europe and the United States for the purpose of inviting investment are beginning to bear fruit. Only a few days ago, the Economic Survey Team from the United States was here with us and the general impression they got of us is one of immense potential for greater American investments. This is a good augury for the membership of your fraternity.

The Chairman in his brief address just now also referred to the number of strikes which took place last year which, in his view, did cause considerable harm to the economy of the country. We in the Government have always taken a firm view on industrial actions, but, at the same time, in a democratic country like ours,

grievances among workers must be given due consideration. This is part and parcel of our efforts to create, here in Malaysia, a just and prosperous society.

While on the subject of industrial action in general, there are many ways of dealing with them, the best of which, of course, would be to stick to the age-long principle of being fair and firm. The Employers should try to be fair to the employees and the employees must do their part in generating economic growth in the country. In a developing country such as ours there is no place for anyone who is not prepared to do his part for the country.

One sit-down strike in a public building was ended rather quickly. The official in charge of the building locked all the toilets.

Head of a small company told strikers to be comfortable, gave them blankets and cases of brandy. When brandy was almost consumed, he called in ten young women to entertain the strikers. Then brought their wives to see how comfortable their husbands are.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all admit that employers, in whatever profession they are in, are busy people, and more often than not, they have to make split-second decisions which will affect the success of their organisations and also their own personal well being.

I would like to relate a story to you that I came across sometime ago.

An employer, needing a Secretary, decided to have the applicants judged by a psychologist. Three girls were interviewed together.

“What do two and two make?”, the psychologist asked the first.

“Four,” was the prompt answer.

To the same question the second girl replied: “It might be twenty two.” The third girl answered: “It might be twenty two and it might be four.”

When the girls had left the room, the psychologist turned triumphantly to the employer. “There, he said, “that’s what psychology does. The first girl said the obvious thing. The second smelled

a rat. The third was going to have it both ways. Now, which girl will you have?"

The employer did not hesitate, "I'll have the blonde with blue eyes," he said.

I hope you employers will make as good decisions as that fellow in the story in discharging your responsibilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has indeed been a pleasure for me to meet all of you this evening. Let me thank you, once again, for the sumptuous dinner and for a very pleasant and enjoyable evening.