

THE BACKBONE OF GOVERNMENT

WHAT CIVIL SERVANTS SHOULD DO

A clear understanding of what is expected of all civil ^{servants} in their duty to the people is amply touched upon by Tun Razak in this address at the Seminar of Senior Government Officers of Malaysia held in Petaling Jaya on 3rd July, 1967. He brings out in relief the various aspects to be kept to view by the officers to ensure a sound government.

I would like to begin by re-quoting my own words spoken sometime ago.

"With the setting up of Malaysia and the working out of the practical mechanics of the relationships between the Central Government and the Governments of Sabah and Sarawak, there have been what I might call administrative teething troubles. From time to time, there have been delay in communication and this has resulted in occasional frustration. both in State headquarters and at Federal headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

There has, however, been a steady improvement in the administrative machinery, but, for even greater improvement greater co-ordination and greater co-operation. I propose sometime later this year to hold, either in Jesselton or Kuching, or perhaps in Kuala Lumpur, a Malaysian Government Seminar lasting several days. At this Seminar, each one of us who has the responsibility of administering the Government will be able to meet and discuss with our counterparts any problems we may have connected with our work. should discuss, suggest and devise ways and means whereby we can speed up and streamline the whole machinery of Government. Particular emphasis must be placed on the development programme machinery, so that the people of Sabah and Sarawak —no matter where they live, in urban areas or in remote rural areas-will get the best service and the quickest service that all true Malaysians, can give to one another"

In your talks and discussions, an honest effort must be made by both Federal and State officers, to try and close the gap of the machinery of government. State as well as Federal, to ensure that all our Malaysian citizens in Eastern Malaysia, get from if

the best service possible *both in development and in administration.*

It is perhaps, unfortunate that the timing of this Seminar coincides with political developments in Sabah. where members of U.P.K.O. are making an unnecessary fuss about the conditions as laid down in the Inter-Governmental Committee Report, when Sabah first joined Malaysia. I do not want to talk at length on the political situation. It should not affect you as civil servants. Politicians may *come and go*, but, the *back-bone* of administration is vested in the hands of civil servants who are the permanent back-bone of any country.

This Seminar is a stepping stone to try and streamline the machinery of government between the Central Government and State Governments, particularly, of those in Eastern Malaysia, so that we can go about our job with *new* vigour and with *new* understanding and tackle our problems, *vis-a-vis*. States and Central Government as expeditiously as possible with the maximum amount of speed and minimum amount of paper work! The first condition to achieve efficiency between the Central and State Governments, is a condition of *understanding*, and I feel that the more contact there is between State officers and Federal officers in every Department throughout the whole structure of Government, the nearer will we be to the goal which we all wish to achieve, A smooth and efficient administration will be given to the people of Sabah. the best that we can give them, not only in the field of development, but *also* in the field of day-to-day administration.

This Seminar must not be merely an *academic* exercise. It is more a "getting together" with frank, free and *un-inhibited* discussion, with the object to achieve a *greater* and *deeper* understanding. not only of the development aims of Malaysia, but *also*. to answer the question: How we can. by *closer State co-operation* and *Federal co-ordination* set Malaysia a *faster pace* on the path of progress? All of you concerned with development, should by now know our development plan by heart; and it should be a *working part of your mental system*. It is necessary that there should be more of a discussion to clear up any doubts that you may have on the *implementation* of our Development Plan.

A talk on Development Administration, should necessarily arouse your minds as to how you can, in your day-to-day work put *more push and punch* into the administration of our country!

The Minister of Labour's talk to you on "Labour Policy", with emphasis on East-West Malaysia, should be interesting. *Immigration* remained as a State subject, because there was always a fear on the Sabah and Sarawak joining Malaysia, that there would be a tremendous influx of immigrants from Singapore and from West Malaysia. This fear was unfounded, for our problem now is how can we make people to migrate to Sabah and Sarawak, preferably skilled labour, in order to go ahead with the task of development. His talks should add to the *value of your experience and knowledge*, towards solving the shortage of skilled labour which exists in Eastern Malaysia, and which is, in fact, not only putting up prices, but also *delaying* development.

As to "*decision-making*".

The making of decisions is the most simple part of the process but what one is most concerned with, is the *implementation of these decisions*. Our development plans have been thought out. Our decisions, on the direction on which Malaysia is going to progress, have been made.

Our *chief* concern should be to so *galvanise each and every officer* concerned with these decisions as to implement them in the *shortest* possible space of time!

The *role of the Civil Service* in a developing country is a subject very near my heart.

My views on the working of a Federal Government may be expressed as follows: "I never, if I can help it, travel in a plane with only *one* engine: I don't feel secure. The *more* engines the aeroplane has, the safer and more secure I feel, because the *more* the engines, the more the *thrust*, the *drive* and the *power!*"

This principle should also apply to a country like ours which is a *Federation*. If you compare it to an aeroplane, we have not just *one* engine to propel the policies of the government, policies of development and policies for *progress*; we have 14 engines, if you regard Federal Government as one engine and every State Government as a separate *boosting charge* with *14 engines* helping us on the way to *progress*. Although an aeroplane may have several engines, that in itself does not guarantee that it can rise to great heights.

The important thing to achieve speed and power is that each and every engine must be perfectly tuned in unison, because if

one engine is out of step with another, the chances are that the aeroplane may crash. So it is. with this Federal form of government which we have adopted and practice in Malaysia. As Malaysia flies on its way to progress and prosperity, we have got to make sure that all our *engines*, in other words, all our State governments are perfectly in tunc with each other and the central engine, the Federal Government, and the purpose of my visits to each State is to adjust the timing and tuning so that with speed and efficiency and with power, we can get Malaysia into orbit, and reach the altitude of success higher even than our hopes.

If. therefore. Malaysia is *really going to progress*, we must not only streamline the Central Government, but also, ensure that each component part of our Federation, *each State Government* is also streamlined and *up-dated* to shoulder the task of tackling the problems which face us on the path of progress, and be able to give our people the best service within our ability. This, really, defines the reason behind this Seminar, and I hope that you put all your energies into *capturing this spirit* behind the making of Malaysia.

Identifying administrative problems between Federal and State Governments. This should be the crux of your coming together.

Speak your mind during this discussion, so that we will be able, as a result of your group-findings, to pin-point any defects in the present administration of Malaysia.

On the subject of "Politics and Administration" As civil servants, I hope you will stand up to us politicians, and not allow yourselves to be dominated by us, because in a true Democracy, the civil servant has a duty to perform.

I speak from experience, having been a civil servant myself; to place fairly and squarely, facts before the politician, based on balanced, unbiased judgement, which the politician "can take it or leave it as he so wishes. After all. civil servants are pensionable: you have nothing to lose; politicians are *not* pensionable; they come and go.

The future of our country's democratic way of life is dependent on you to a certain extent You must become lively, active, balanced and unbiased civil servants, able to serve our government with a *spirit of dedication* on the one hand, and on the other. a *lively mind!*

We have inherited by virtue of our colonial heritage, a Civil Service which is too much tied to paper and desk. This attitude of mind must be adjusted in keeping with modern times, if Malaysia is to survive and succeed in its present battle for Development.

"Education and its role in Nation-building. Perhaps, it is one of the most important aspects in the process of national development.

I say this, because, although we are a country abundant in natural resources such as tin, timber, rubber and iron ore, our greatest resource *lies* really in the *resources of our own people*. We, in the last five years of our development, have invested a tremendous lot in our economic infrastructure. Now we need to strengthen our nation by investing in our youth.

The future of any country, which is dependent upon the will and wisdom of its citizens is damaged when any of its children are not educated to the full extent of their talents from Primary school to Secondary and higher education. The trend of our development, at the moment, having laid the infrastructure is, therefore, focussed on an investment in human skills.

One question remains to be answered: "How can we, both the elected politicians and government servants, *improve, streamline and speed up* the efficiency of the administration and development of our country—Malaysia.?"

I am happy to know that the National Family Planning Board anticipates that by their current progress, birth rates will drop by 2% by 1985, that is 0.2% lower than that projected by the Government. If this can be achieved, then it will undoubtedly take us far ahead of all developing countries. If we succeed in doing this, then clearly before the end of the century we will be able to eliminate poverty, ill-health and illiteracy among our people and to build a modern society and a happy and contented people.

— *Tun Razak in launching National Planning Week in Kuala Lumpur on 8th June, 1968.*