

# THE WOMEN AND NATIONHOOD

## BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PROGRESS

*"Every woman in every home should have a knowledge of the basic principles of progress, a clear definition of direction of development and a true understanding of the part to play. This " said Tun Razak in the course of his address to the National Council of Women's Organisations on August 25, 1966. "is the greatest contribution from women towards the country's future."*

I should like, Madam President, to congratulate you and your National Council for the initiative you have taken in holding this Seminar. As you said, your Council is only one year old but this one year old child has already embarked on a Seminar which will discuss topics covering such a wide field as you have explained.

A famous historian wrote some three hundred years ago " There is a woman at the beginning of all great things" and I am sure that the coming together of so many leaders of our women's organisations throughout the country will mean great things for our people and our country. I can assure you that whatever recommendations you may put forward as a result of your deliberations in this Seminar will be given the most careful consideration by the Government.

It is indeed a matter of great satisfaction that since Independence our women in Malaya have come forward in all fields—development, social, administrative and even the defence of our country. Our young country certainly needs the energies, the force and the power that our women can give to it. There is much that women and women's organisations can do for our people and our country.

That is why I welcome your idea of holding this Seminar. Progress of any nation lies in the hearts and the minds of its people and it is in this aspect and in this call to action by the people in the development of our nation that the wonderful weapon womanhood can be used with tremendous effect. A woman has a weapon which is more powerful than any which belong to the greatest armed forces of the world. There is no defence against the soft and persuasive voice of a woman. But to use this weapon you must have plenty of ammunition and I suggest that the basic task of any organisation such as yours is to make sure that every woman in every home has a knowledge of the basic principles of

progress, a clear definition of direction of development and a true understanding of the part she can play.

I feel that the greatest contribution that our women can make towards the progress and development of this country is by the soft but persistent voice in every home, persuading and inspiring their husbands and their sons to greater efforts, to harder work and to greater dedication to improve their standard of living and their way of life.

While persuading and inspiring their husbands and their sons to play their full role in the development and progress of our country the women themselves can also play their part. By their efforts and by their endeavour they can improve their homes, ie by having better conditions in their homes, by having more balanced diets in the family. Also women can help to supplement family income by establishing small cottage industries in the home so that they and their daughters can do useful work in their spare time. Above all our women, by their effort and example can generate a spirit of change and progress in the home. These are the basic things which I feel our women can do and can play their part in the development and progress of our nation.

While I appreciate that our women have a wish and a desire to do their best in such professions as medical, legal, and administration, in business and such other services for the community. however, as the majority of our women live in the villages, and the kampongs and have not had education to take part in those professions. I would like them to be guided and assisted to play their part in the progress and development of our country. We in the Government have to look to the people as a whole, have to do more to the less fortunate of our people. Our Alliance Government has pledged itself to improve the way of life of our people, to give them a better and higher standard of living. Therefore it is on these things that I would like to see more emphasis and more thought to be directed.

I agree that our women should be assisted and guided to take their rightful place in the professions and in administration, but have to do our work in accordance with priorities and we feel that the people in the kampongs and the villages, both the new and old. have a prior call on our time and our energy because they need our help.

I can assure you the Government is grateful to your Council for your pledge of loyalty, for the support and co-operation that you