

POLITICIANS AND ADVERTISING AGENTS: THE DIFFERENCE

The role of advertisers and advertising agents is very relevant especially in developing countries like Malaysia. This opinion was expressed by Tan Razak when he spoke at the Sixth Asian Advertising Congress Dinner in Kuala Lumpur on 28th June. 1968.

I must say that your occupation, advertising agents, and mine have one important thing in common. We both have to serve our masters and produce results. If we don't, in your case you will be thrown out of jobs, and in my case. I will be thrown out of office. However, there is. I admit, one difference—a good politician advertises on the basis of the results he has produced; whereas you. ladies and gentlemen, advertise to get results.

I understand that the theme of your Congress is effective communications in the Asian region and the role of advertisers and advertising agents in achieving this objective. This subject of effective communication in this region of Asia is not only of great interest to businessmen, but also to responsible governments of countries in this region.

We in Malaysia are particularly interested in this because Malaysia is a meeting place of Asian cultural and ethnic groups and because Malaysia is a country not only with people of diverse origin, but also of vast distance and difficult terrain and of different standards of development.

Indeed. Malaysia provides a mirror of the various problems and challenges of communications in Asia. We are. therefore, greatly interested in your discussions and deliberations in order that we can share the benefit of your wise counsel and experience in solving the many problems that we are facing.

ladies and gentlemen. Asia, and particularly Southeast Asia. is on the cross-roads of changes and progress. There are conflicting

forces at work here and the future is somewhat uncertain. However, as far as we in Malaysia are concerned, our people are determined to survive, to progress and to prosper. During the eleven years since we achieved Independence, our people have shown that they have the will and the courage and resilience to face problems and challenges and to move forward, whatever obstacles that may be on our path, and despite the uncertainties of the future.

We here are confident that given the goodwill and the determination to work together, countries in Asia and in Southeast Asia will be able to live in peace and harmony. We believe that peaceful co-existence, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, are the best guarantees for the future peace and stability of this region: and we would like all countries within this region and outside to realise and understand that this is the only policy that would be accepted by the people here and that would bring benefit to all concerned.

Ladies and gentlemen, now coming to the subject of your Congress. As I said, your main theme, communication in Asia and the role of the advertisers and advertising agents is very relevant especially in developing countries like Malaysia. We have a young, growing population, eager and ready to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing world. Our economy is expanding fast, both in the agricultural and industrial sectors. We are changing our physical environment and our mental outlook as well. Our quiet silent revolution is well in progress, as you can see all around you. We are creating a multitude of wants. This is where you. Ladies and gentlemen, come in.

Our producers, who are trying to open markets inside and outside the country, can make wider use of the advertising medium to create and sustain markets for their goods. Our producers must first be sure that their goods conform to a standard, before advertising can help them find customers. I'm sure you all agree with me, ladies and gentlemen, that when all is said and done honesty is the best policy. However, I don't know if you will

want to be as frank as the sign outside a small town shop which says "Why go to be cheated elsewhere when you can be cheated right here?"

It docs not pay to make exaggerated claims that cannot be fulfilled cither. May I make a plea here for some general ethics in advertising, to prevent an unscrupulous few from spoiling the good name of the rest so that you can make it your motto: "What is good for the Public is good for the Advertisers" instead of "What is good for the Advertisers must be good for the Public".

A responsible advertising agent will thus slant his appeal so as to protect the public interest. Take the advertisement for cars and car-related products for example. In this age of adventures in outer space, it may not be fashionable to mention safety in connection with cars, but it would certainly be a public service if the industry were to do so. I was interested to see an international petrol company, in its advertisement, urging its customers to drive carefully after extolling the virtues of its products.

Of course, the underlying motive is that a driver who lives longer, will use that company's petrol in correspondingly greater quantity. What is apparent is that the company cares for its customers, and through this appeal, may win a wider market.

You. ladies and gentlemen, as advertising agents, have the power to shape public taste. This power, of which you are well aware, has been discussed by many writers, including Professor John Galbraith and Mr Vance Packard. It is not for me to discuss it here. What I would urge you to do is to use this power with restraint and responsibility. The average man's dream is to improve the quality of his life, and you can do your share in helping him achieve this.

Just as a good advertising agent knows when to change his advertisement before the public gets tired of it. so one of the good rules of effective communication is to know when to stop. on that note. Mr Chairman. I will now fade away to allow you project your next advertisement.