

PSM's people power vs Pakatan's party power

MalaysiaKini.com

April 17, 2013

By S Thayaparan

"They don't know who their allies and enemies are."

- PSM secretary-general S Arutchelvan

COMMENT A better way to put it, S Arutchelvan, would be "with friends like this, who needs Umno-BN enemies?" Under the title 'PKR, you can't enter Putrajaya with your brand of arrogance!' my comrade in this struggle for regime change, blogger Zorro Unmasked, writes:

"I will not vote for Sivarasa in Subang, my parliamentary constituent, if PKR disturbs with a three-cornered fight in Kota Damansara, my state constituency. I have nothing against Sivarasa. I voted for him in 2008. It is the posture PKR is taking that I vehemently am opposed to. This is tantamount to bullying, Umno-style."

Now, R Sivarasa and his wife are good friends of mine and Sivarasa is the kind of person we as Malaysians need in the halls of power in Putrajaya. More importantly, every single member of a political party like Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) should be considered as agents of real change in Malaysia and should be 'allowed' to do their work that goes far beyond the sordid business of getting elected.

It amazes me why PKR, or should that be Pakatan Rakyat, would want to alienate allies like these? Where I vote in Lembah Pantai, the incumbent is PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar and it would be a waste if right-thinking Malaysians would render these Pakatan candidates as collateral damage of political infighting by abstaining to vote.

Right-thinking voters may do this simply because the power-brokers of Pakatan see fit in their arrogance to dismiss a political party like PSM in order to fulfill whatever cravings for power that has been slowly manifesting in a party made up of former Umno exiles intent on reclaiming what they think they are owed.

In these heady days, this close to May 5, they assume that Pakatan is a force to be reckoned with and the sometimes-blind hatred for Umno-BN of some of their vocal online supporters would translate to a free pass in perpetuity for Pakatan.

But many, and not just partisan bloggers, have noticed the emerging 'arrogance' of

PKR, not to mention Pakatan, when it comes to the way how they deal with issues concerning not only their allies but regarding policy. Getting criticism from your partisans may be easily dismissed but when middle-of-the-road Malaysians start making such comments, then you had better pay attention.

Moreover, if Pakatan is ignorant of the existence of such criticisms, then I suggest they are not paying attention to the ground and are drunk on their own kool aid.

The next big fight

However, Pakatan leader Anwar Ibrahim has never really known who his friends are. The potential prime minister's career is littered with former associates who have become mouthpieces for Umno. Even pre-tsunami 2008, defections seemed to emanate from his party of close cadres.

Conventional wisdom goes that nobody expected the 2008 tsunami and Pakatan was hustling for candidates, and the mood of the country was such that if a monkey were offered up, it would be voted in. The list of pro-Umno-BN friendly independent candidates who jumped ship is proof of this.

Pakatan assured us that in the next big fight, they would only put up candidates of 'calibre' but instead of doing so; they seem to be rejecting those candidates who have shown a commitment to working for the Pakatan cause in the five years since the tsunami. Instead, what Pakatan seems to be doing is offering up slick political operatives who seem to have come out of the woodworks, now that Pakatan has a chance of grabbing federal power.

Perhaps it would be good to let PSM speak for itself. Here are the four major points in a letter addressed to the leadership of Pakatan.

1. PSM menyokong sepenuhnya Pakatan dalam PRU13 dan akan berkempen untuk memastikan kemenangan Pakatan disemua kerusi. Kami cukup jelas bahawa musuh politik untuk ditewaskan adalah Umno-BN.

2. PSM akan bertanding di hanya 4 kerusi (mengikut status quo) PRU ke 12. Untuk makluman, sejak PRU pada tahun 2004, 2008 dan kini 2013, PSM hanya bertanding di 4 kerusi meminjam logo parti pembangkang. Justeru itu tidak ada persoalan PSM tamak kerusi atau mahu bertanding di lebih kerusi. Yang beza adalah kali ini, PSM sudah berdaftar dan dalam keadaan sudah berdaftar PSM akan menggunakan logo sendiri untuk bertanding seperti mana parti-parti lain yang sudah berdaftar dalam Pakatan.

3. Demi solidariti dan semangat perjuangan, PSM meminta Pakatan untuk tidak bertanding di 4 kerusi ini atau menjadikan 4 tempat ini 3 penjur. Andaikata Pakatan meletakkan calon di 4 kerusi ini, maka PSM akan masih menyokong Pakatan disemua kerusi lain kecuali 4 kerusi ini.

4. Namun demikian kami sedar bahawa isu DUN Jelapang adalah lebih rumit lagi kerana dalam PRU13 kerusi ini memang 3 penjur. PSM menuntut kerusi ini kerana setelah calon DAP yang dipilih lompat parti, calon PSM yang kalah masih menjalankan kerja sehingga diakui ramai sebagai calon yang paling ketara (visible) dan rajin membuat kerja dikawasan tersebut.

As far as the Jelapang seat is concerned, PSM has said that it would abide by the decision of a group of selected NGOs who would mediate between them and DAP. How is that for consensus building?

What is disheartening about oppositional politics and perhaps an indication of the shape of things to come is when Pakatan partisans heap scorn on PSM by referring to them as a "mosquito" party. This really goes to the level of thinking of your average Pakatan supporter.

Post-tsunami 2008, the ranks of the so-called 'giant' parties like PKR, PAS and DAP have swelled to include charlatans, would-be messiahs and host of other opportunists eager for a ride on what they believe would be the new gravy train.

Meanwhile a party like PSM has been diligently attending to the business of making people's lives, mostly the disenfranchised, a little better through the arduous task of negotiating through the political process, mindful of the giants in their midst.

New form of tyranny

My reasons for supporting a party like PSM and the work they do are selfish. I want other people to commit to the work of actually helping people who live in the margins. The consequence of democracy and realpolitik are often felt by the disenfranchised. The work of political groups like the PSM is to attempt to remedy such flaws in the system.

PSM has since relented on running under its own logo but Pakatan still needs to meet them half way and give them the seats they ask for, which would ensure that Pakatan has at least some candidates who would bring integrity to an alliance mired in many of the same problems as BN.

As for the Cameron Highland's seat, this is what Arutchelvan had to say, "(It) goes

against the PSM's election standards where candidates must have worked in an area for five years and must be endorsed by the local branch. PSM does not allow parachute candidates."

I do not know about anyone else but I think the folks in Cameron's deserve a candidate who has worked the ground and belongs to a political party which attempts to hold themselves to some standards when everyone else is rushing to the altar of political expediency to make a sacrifice for the supposed greater good.

We should never forget PSM leader Dr D Jeyakumar's (left) speech at the Himpunan Kebangkitan Rakyat (People's Uprising Rally) three months ago, where he warned that we should be ever vigilant lest we replace Umno with a new form of tyranny. Pakatan partisans always scream about the enemy on the outside, but Malaysian political history is bloated with enemies from within.

What Malaysians need, are leaders who are cognisant of such a reality. PKR, DAP and PAS should stop being intransigent and allow PSM to contest under their own banner in the seats they want. They should stop stonewalling PSM and get into the real business of 'ubah'.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/227033>