

Moderates outwitted in Umno Baru
Malaysiakini.com
September 3, 2010

I refer to the Malaysiakini report Zam's back...and gets nasty with PAS.

While looking back to the Tunku's era, former Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin has forgotten how things have changed over the five decades.

In the past, PAS may be labelled as 'extremists' by the mainstream media and still are being painted as such even now but what has happened over the years is something that Zainuddin has failed to see. It is no wonder that he and the columnists of Utusan Malaysia, a government-linked publication known for its racist attitude, could say without blinking their eyes that 'PAS is a racist party based on Islamic extremism.'

In recent years after the 2008 general election, I had the opportunity of meeting some PAS people as friends. I have found them to be more polite and friendly, and in many ways, more rational in their thinking. People like Khalid Samad had spoken up on issues that show that he is a moderate Muslim, compared to those who spat on cow heads or called it a 'silly' cow head.

Even Nik Aziz Nik Mat and Anwar Ibrahim earned the respect of the Christian community in this country when they referred to their Al-Quran and said it is not wrong for the name of Allah to be used by other communities. If Umno leaders say Anwar and Nik Aziz are wrong then what does it make an influential world Islamic cleric, Sheikh Dr Yusuf Al Qaradawi who basically adopted the same stand as most other Muslim nations in the world?

From what I see, PAS' Khalid Samad is far more rational than someone who protected the protestors outside the Selangor state government office. I have become one of his fans in the past two years.

Zainuddin is also missing a point. During the time of our beloved Bapa Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman's, Umno was fighting for independence. He had the support of the Chinese and the Indian communities. People were rallying behind the Malaysian flag. They treated each others as fellow Malaysians.

Now, despite having a sizeable membership, how many Umno members are patriotic enough to even fly the Jalur Gemilang during the lead-up to the Merdeka celebration? Umno's Rais Yatim gave the excuse that the Muslims were fasting, but the truth is, it doesn't take much effort

to fly the flag. Except for an occasional flag here and there, how many flags have we seen on vehicles?

If Zainuddin cares to go back to history, he should realise that along the way, things changed, and what we know now as the old Umno, had died in 1987. Even Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah failed to subsequently revive the spirit of Umno of the 40s with his now-defunct Semangt 46. Dr

Mahathir Mohamad started what is known as 'Umno Baru'.

Ten years down the road, he sacked Anwar Ibrahim, his deputy, who is a moderate and well- respected Malay and Muslim leader in this country. Even Nik Aziz is well-regarded by

many of the non-Muslim community now for his humble standard of living. I am sure Nik Aziz's official home would not cost RM23 million and I have read about the Penang Chief Minister, Lim Guan Eng travelling on economy class even when he is on official trips.

The Umno Baru, as we see it, is the organisation which the former prime minister did not hesitate to call a racist organisation in his recent spat with Syed Nazri. Not until you start to read Barry Wain's book *The Malaysian Malverick* would many of you still be holding this man in high regards. For three years, he had been bashing Pak Lah, until to a point that I had to say 'enough is enough'.

We should also not forget that the moderates from the Tunku era, in the likes of Tengku Razaleigh, Musa Hitam, Shahrir Samad and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi have mostly been outwitted in the Umno Baru. Most of these people have joined PKR and PAS. Or, within Umno, their voices have become muted.

What we see in the new Umno are people like Ahmad Ismail, Nasir Safar and now, the Tun, as an Umno member, is the patron of the Perkasa group, where its chief, Ibrahim Ali is both rude and loudmouthed, and in my opinion, makes no constructive contribution to nation-building with his speeches and threats. I wonder if he has gone overboard because the authority appears not to take any action against him.

What we also see are people who do nothing more than lodging one police report after another, instead of being engaged in intelligent debates with opposition leaders so that thinking people like us can make our own judgement of who is right, who is wrong.

All along, the Chinese and the Indian communities, as well as our brothers and sisters in East Malaysia, have remained unprovoked by these people who continue to play racial cards. The government-linked Utusan Malaysia has sensationalised issues that try to provoke the feelings of the other communities, and made attempts to pit the Malays against the other races in this country.

What most people are waiting for is the next general election.

Zainuddin should therefore check his facts again and ask why he is still in Umno when he apparently claims himself to be a non-racist. Otherwise, as the proverbial saying goes, 'Do not point your forefinger at others for four other fingers will be pointed at you.'

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