

## **Where are the principled politicians and activists?**

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Dr Chandra Muzaffar the champion of justice has, of late, assumed the visage of a hydra, speaking out against the opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim in perfectly timed executions. Just before the March 8 election, he, like most other Malaysians had no inkling that the political tsunami was coming and he came out with his badly mistimed denunciation of Anwar. It left no one in doubt that this once strident critic of the BN government had now become its slickest apologist.

MCPX

lebanon forum 050906 chandra madAs if that embarrassment wasn't enough humiliation for him, Chandra came out again with another denunciation of Anwar during the Permatang Pauh by-election in 'Undesirable short Cut on the road to power'.

As in the first case, Chandra clearly thought that he could influence the outcome of the elections by casting doubts about Anwar in the voters' minds. The results have proven otherwise.

But this article is not about Chandra Muzaffar. It is about his taunt at the "principled politicians and committed human rights activists around Anwar" who condone the "despicable politics... of trying to enter Putrajaya through the back door."

Unlike Chandra, I try to avoid giving the BN any benefit after their 50 years of misrule and racist policies. But now that the Permatang Pauh by-election is over, I would like to take up this issue with the "principled politicians and activists" around Anwar who seem to have compromised their principles for "real" politics.

I believe committed democrats need to look at the new Malaysian politics with their eyes and their minds wide open.

What's People's Democracy got to do with it?

Firstly, what has the crossover by BN legislators to Pakatan Rakyat to do with democracy and progressive politics?

Have they forgotten the sickening revulsion felt by the people when the PBS state government was undermined by the BN in 1994? Are BN reps interchangeable with Pakatan MPs like Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola? Is it ethical for politicians to betray their electoral stand to their voters? Why does Anwar have to be PM by September 16?

Our "principled politicians and activists" do need to answer Chandra and not skirt the issue.

### **It's the issues, not personalities**

It is pathetic that our "principled politicians and activists" now fall for the personality factor instead of focusing on the issues before the people.

Thus Anwar's agenda has now become their agenda. They should tell us how our lives are

going to be different if and when Anwar becomes the PM on Sept 16. Are these issues confronting the people being discussed in the crossover talks or do they involve the usual horse-trading around who gets which plum office?

Furthermore, was there no hope in this country when Anwar was in Umno? This sudden lapse of democratic and socialist principles among our erstwhile activists due to the "Anwar factor" is truly astonishing.

### **Men's candidature initiative**

I am also surprised that the principled women activists can keep silent while Dr Wan Azizah gives up her seat for her husband in Permatang Pauh. I know my companera Toni Kassim would not have approved!

anwar ibrahim wan azizah permatang pauh by election 310708After so much hard work to get more women leaders to step forward to take office, what a letdown that the leader of PKR has to give up her seat for her husband! It is also downright patronising to the voters of Permatang Pauh. Of course, the male apologists will say, "But Wan Azizah herself wanted to resign, she is a reluctant politician..."

As usual, when it's a male reluctant politician, he would still stay in office until struck down by a terminal illness. It would have made more sense for either Khalid Ibrahim or Lim Guan Eng to give up their seats for Anwar because they have enough work on their hands in their respective states and there is just no democratic justification for a person to be a state representative as well as a federal representative.

Malaysia is probably the only country in the world where politicians can get away with such lame excuses for holding state and federal posts. Do these politicians really believe that they are indispensable or do they take Malaysians for dummies?

The men in politics should not shout about democracy or political principles if they cannot relinquish their privileges to run for multiple offices or they fail to accept restrictions on the holding of any high office. On the latter principle, they can take a leaf from backward MCA or imperialist USA which restricts the term of their presidents!

### **Co-opted activists**

I am truly surprised that the activists of yesteryear can accept appointments as local councillors after shouting for years that there can be no democracy without elected local governments and that appointed "representatives" (sic) including senators are basically failed politicians. In fact, much more unflattering language has been used to describe appointed "representatives" in the bad old days when the BN held the roost in every state.

Has Pakatan appointed the best candidates to the local councils or are not most of these appointments merely "jobs for the boys"? Where is the accountability? So what's the difference with BN appointees?

Committed activists should be working harder than ever to reinstate elected local government in this country since Pakatan Rakyat is committed to this policy and not be tokens of PR. Leave the appointed posts for others who hanker for such things. The local councils are not going to flounder because you are not in them!

### **Last call for committed activists!**

The actions of the various Pakatan-run state governments since the last elections show that they are more interested in populist politics and are not about to introduce substantive political change without constant shoving and shaming by committed and consistent democrats.

The move to offer free water is a retrogressive step for the water lobby that has always called for responsible demand management. All the car fetishists who wash their cars everyday should be made to pay dearly for their fetishism. I am surprised those activists involved in opposing the Selangor dam and the Kelau dam have not come out to denounce this populist move.

Now, more than ever, committed and principled activists are needed to lead the peoples' struggles.

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