

ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
TO THE EUROPEAN CIVIL SERVANTS
ASSOCIATION OF MALAYA ON 21ST
FEBRUARY, 1960

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen

When I spoke to you last year I said that I felt confident that the Alliance would win the Election and that Tunku Abdul Rahman would be able to talk to you at your Annual General Meeting in 1960 as Prime Minister. The first part of my forecast came true and I appreciate the congratulations which your President has expressed on your behalf.

The Prime Minister unfortunately is not able to speak to you today but I am delighted to be able to take his place. I am glad of your President's assurance that my remarks will be treated as confidential as there are certain matters on which I can, I think, say something which will result in a better understanding of the position.

I was slightly disappointed when I heard your President say that it had not been possible for you to come to a closer understanding with the Senior Government Officers' Association. I appreciate, however, that, so long as expatriate officers remain in service, there will be certain problems peculiar to them and I appreciate the reasons which prompted your Council to make the decision that your Association should continue as a separate entity. I hope, however, that in the future you will be able to reach a large measure of agreement with the Senior Government Officers' Association and with the Malayan Civil Service Association on matters of common concern and to continue to make your contribution to the smooth running of the Whitley Council.

Your President has stated that it is his opinion that there is a feeling that Malayanisation is too slow and he has invited Government to make its position clear in a Press statement.

You will appreciate that the major difficulty which faces Government in this matter is the Press itself. It is a fact throughout the world that the ill-formed and extreme comment

gets very much better publicity than the studied, reasoned appreciation of the problem. There is nothing that Government can do to force the Press to publish any statement of Government's policy and there is certainly nothing that Government can do to force the Press to give such a statement, if it is published, to inch headlines instead of hiding it away in some inconspicuous place amongst the advertisements. The matter of Malayanisation has been touched upon by His Majesty in the Speech from the Throne and has been the subject of a number of questions in the House of Representatives. It is in these references that Government's policy is made clear. Government is, in general, satisfied with the progress of Malayanisation and I am certainly not aware of any intention on behalf of Government to Malayanise any part of the public service by every possible means irrespective of loss of efficiency. It is our hope that efficiency would be maintained at the high level which has been set in the past. In some departments, however, the retirement of expatriate officers before the end of their guaranteed period of service has resulted in a shortage of experienced staff and those who remain, together with the Malayan officers, are shouldering additional burdens.

I can well appreciate the concern of the officers in those departments that are in the 1965 group. Government has recently decided that the proviso to Clause 6 of the Compensation Legislation may be invoked in the case of those officers in the 1962 group whose departure will be staggered throughout the year and whose retirement dates will be after the 1st July, 1962. Government has also decided that the staffing position in each of the departments in the 1965 group should be examined with a view to deciding whether or not the proviso would be exercised in respect of individual officers in these departments.

It will be appreciated that the proviso need not be invoked in the case of the younger officers whose compensation is increasing. This examination is still in progress and I am, at this stage, unable to say to what extent the proviso to Clause 6 of the Tenth Schedule will be invoked. It should, however, be possible for officers to be informed by the middle of this year whether or not the proviso will be invoked in their favour.

I was sorry to hear that your President found that it was necessary for him to mention once more the question of "political interference". I feel that the word "interference" is rather strongly used in such a sense.

You will understand my reluctance to make any pronouncement on the case in the Language Institute. Faults there were on all sides but I think that, in the light of what I said earlier about the question of eye-catching headlines in the Press, it has been generally accepted that the publicity given to this matter in the Press was most unfortunate. I trust that there will be no further instances of this nature which can only become a source of embarrassment to everyone who has the interests of the public service at heart.

I said that I feel that the word "interference" was too strong a word to use. Ministers in this country are, by virtue of the comparatively small size of the country and the compact system of administration, more closely in touch with civil servants than, I imagine, in any other place in the world. The Ministers have identified themselves very closely with the execution of the policy as well as with the formation of the policy.

I myself, as you know, have recently undertaken a tour in order that I could personally explain to civil servants and other interested persons, Government's policy on rural development and the manner in which I hope to see this policy translated into action on the ground. In these circumstances it is extremely difficult for Ministers not to become interested in the civil service and even in the personalities. They know very well who is doing a good job and often feel that it is right for them to express a preference as to which officer should be entrusted with a particular task. This, I feel you will agree, is only human. The closer association between Ministers and civil servants can only bring good in the end provided both understand to the full the position of the other. I have always tried and I will continue in the future to attempt to see that this closer association between Ministers and civil servants does not result in unnecessary friction. You will forgive me if I say that it is apparent that the faults have not always been on the side of the Ministers.

Your President has, not unnaturally, been outspoken about the housing situation particularly in Kuala Lumpur. This is a problem which presents no easy solution. The rapid expansion of the public service during the last few years has made it quite impossible for Government to keep pace in the matter of housing. I am glad to know, however, that complete agreement has almost

been reached in Whitley Council, where of course your Association is represented, on the implementation of the Government Housing Proposals which should benefit expatriate officers to the extent that they should be able to obtain a house rather more quickly than they do at the present time. The proposals do, of course, contain provision for rents to be increased by a modest amount but this is no new provision: it has been an integral part of the proposals ever since they were first discussed in 1956.

I welcome this opportunity of being able to speak to you and to say, as I said last year, thank you for the work that you are doing on behalf of the Federation of Malaya. Last year we saw the Alliance Government returned to power with an overwhelming vote of confidence from the people in this country. Government has decided, as you know, that overriding priority shall be given to its programme for rural development and I myself am very closely concerned with this aspect of Government's programme. I should like to appeal to those of you who are connected with any service which impinges upon this work to do your utmost to see that rapid and worthwhile progress is made in schemes to improve the lot of people living in the rural areas. It would take me too long to explain the detailed plans that we have and all that I ask is that you should assist this programme in any way that you can.

I said last year that you would appreciate that it was not always possible for me or any of my colleagues to single out the expatriate officers in order to thank them for the work that they are doing in this independent Malaya. The same applies with equal or even more force now but I welcome this opportunity of saying to you that your efforts are appreciated and members of the Government hope that you derive some satisfaction from seeing the success of your labours. I know that many of you have, particularly Heads of Departments, the additional burden of having to train, and to train very quickly, Malayan officers to take over in anticipation of your leaving the country. We are very grateful for the earnest and sincere manner in which this task of training Malayan officers has been undertaken.

In conclusion I should like to thank you again for asking me to your meeting this morning and for giving me the opportunity of saying these few words.