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SPEECH BY  
THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING  
OF THE THIRD BIENNIAL DELEGATES  
CONFERENCE OF THE RAILWAYMEN'S  
UNION OF MALAYA IN PENANG  
ON 2ND SEPTEMBER, 1966.

Yang di-Pertua, Ahli-ahli Perwakilan, Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan sekalian,

Saya amat sukacita kerana dapat hadir dan membuka Persidangan Agung Kesatuan Pekerja-pekerja Keretapi Se Tanah Melayu pada hari yang berbahagia ini.

Oleh kerana saya nampak banyak ahli-ahli Perwakilan yang mungkin kurang pengetahuan dalam Bahasa Kebangsaan, sungguh pun, saya yakin mereka sedang mempelajari Bahasa Kebangsaan. Saya harap tuan-tuan mempelajarnya bersungguh-sungguh supaya tuan-tuan sekalian dapat menggunakannya dengan baik pada masa yang akan datang. Kerana ini dan bagi memudahkan tuan-tuan dan puan-puan memahami ucapan saya, saya akan berucap dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Tetapi pada masa-masa yang akan datang, saya akan berucap dalam Bahasa Kebangsaan.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am extremely happy to be here this morning and to declare open the Third Biennial Delegates Conference of your Union. I would like to thank you all for inviting me to perform this pleasant task and for the opportunity of meeting so many of your members from different parts of the country.

This Conference marks another milestone in the progress of your Union. This is an important occasion for you all to take stock of the Union's position; to reflect on its activities since the last delegates Conference and to discuss, define and determine its programme and

policies for the coming years so that it may continue to function with the vitality it has shown in the past.

As you all know, Malaysia has just emerged from three years of uncertainty and anxiety - a period during which our national sovereignty, our democratic way of life and all that we cherish were threatened. It necessitated the spending of a greater proportion of our national income on military and security measures with correspondingly less funds being available for the implementation of national development plan. We are very happy that confrontation is now over and we hope to be able to push on with our development plans at greater pace and intensity. I wish to take this opportunity of joining our Prime Minister, whose letter of appreciation appears in the opening page of your Third Biennial Report, in thanking your Union, on behalf of the Government, for the loyalty and support it has spontaneously given the Government during the unhappy period.

What man is searching for is simple enough - security, a good standard of living, opportunity for advancement, self-respect and regard of personal dignity. The Alliance Government is pledged to work for the achievement of these objectives. We would like Malaysians to have the good things in life and at the same time have pride and dignity. We cannot achieve our objectives if employers and workers, and government and people are always in conflict. A situation like that is certainly not conducive to the progress of any community or nation. It is thus the duty of all of us to see that there always exists understanding and cooperation between the government and the people, the employers and the employees.

Integration of interests by employers and workers is a positive solution to many of our labour-management problems and we are happy that in our country this concept has found favour and acceptance. But to develop this concept we have to cast aside the idea of victory for one side and defeat for the other. There will be the necessity for leadership but a leader does not necessarily impose a solution.

The wise man, whether a worker or an industrialist, appreciates a situation by considering the relevant factors and arrives at a solution by a process of deductive reasoning. More than one solution may be evolved but there will probably be a particular one which indicates

the best course of action not for sectional interests but for the larger interests of the country. There are many who must revise their concept of power and leadership. The forces which go to make up power must be coactive and not coercive and the best leader is one who is able to integrate the experience of all and use it to a common purpose or as a Chinese proverb goes "The best leader is he who appears to follow".

A Trade Union should play an important role in the preservation of democratic principles. It is one of the few effective voice of the people in the defence of their living standards and their freedom. But the trade union's role is much more than just striving for just better wages and working conditions. As it is composed of people with all problems and aspirations of mankind, the Union must work for the betterment of humanity in every field of endeavour. No aspect can be overlooked. The Union must take care to preserve and build the rich culture of our land, to guide the activities and development of your young people, to improve educational opportunities for the present and the coming generations. Participation by the union and its members in these fields is a duty no good union can or should or want to shirk. A trade union has no less responsibility for promoting a system that will protect the interests of the people and those of their children.

The Alliance Government is determined to improve the living standards of the people. Its concern is particularly focussed on the have-nots. Its aim is "shared affluence" and not shared poverty as is evident from the objects of the First Malaysia Plan. The Plan calls for a balanced development of all sectors. The development of the agricultural and rural sector continues to be given great importance because progress in this sector is crucial to the overall development of our nation's economy. A considerable extent of undeveloped land and exploitable forests and a wide range of new agricultural activities constitute significant opportunities for raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities. However, it is realised that acceleration of agricultural activities will not be sufficient to generate and maintain a high rate of income and employment growth. It is also appreciated that although our economic strength lies mainly in our position as the world's largest single producer of natural rubber and tin, with substantial export earnings also from timber, palm-oil and other agricultural products, we must nevertheless diversify our

economy and accelerate industrialization, if we are to achieve our objectives. We have been independent for nine years and in the process we have also been working towards economic independence. I think we can say that in the economic field Malaysia has reached the "take-off" point in economic growth.

Industrialization brings an increasing number of workers into the wage-economy and the cycle of economic development largely depends upon the balance and cooperation between capital and labour. It is apparent that in as much as the system of voluntary collective bargaining is feasible, it requires the establishment of attitudes of mutual forbearance and the realization by either side that it is their own interests to keep both capital and labour in productive circulation. It is necessary, however, that in our developing economy, we cannot afford any prolonged industrial disagreements or unrest.

In the case of the Railways, over a considerable number of years now there has been a series of disagreements between your Union and the Railway Administration. Some of these have been satisfactorily resolved, not without some degree of recriminations on either side. What is clear nevertheless is a constant challenging of the Railway Administration to discharge its responsibilities not only to its employees, but also to the public and even now there is an issue before the Industrial Arbitration Tribunal. As I have said, the Government cannot afford to perpetuate a system that does not make any provision for measures which could curb the exuberance of workers or employers without due regard to the larger interests of the country. Primarily for this reason, therefore, the Government must consider the introduction of certain measures which could deal with developing situations in certain circumstances which in turn, if not held in check, could be considerably detrimental to the public interests. It is, however, clear that Government continues to encourage the growth of a free, responsible and democratic trade union movement.

Some people think of national development and their own standards of living in terms of Government spending, in terms of making available funds for development projects and financial disbursements. This thinking is not altogether correct because the real key to the development of any country and improved living

standards lies not so much in the governmental expenditure of dollars and cents but is in fact measured by the productivity of its people - growing production in agriculture, industry as well as the intellectual productivity and capacity of all Malaysians.

A theory which is often quoted is "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work". Nobody would disagree except on what constitutes a fair day's wages and a fair day's work. We are in search of a better standard of living and a good minimum standard for the lowest paid worker. But this can only be achieved by higher productivity.

The workers and Union in this country have a special role to play in nation building and in the inculcation of Malaysian consciousness. Trade Union leaders and workers must help the Government to foster a united, tolerant, multi-racial people where there is a sense of justice and national solidarity. Workers on the whole are good examples of "Malaysians". Racial feeling among workers is non-existent or at least at the minimum compared with other groups of people. An Indian worker has more in common with a Chinese worker than he has with an Indian businessman. Believing in this, all workers should be less communal than other groups of people. It should also be true among professional people - a Malay lawyer has more similarities with a Eurasian lawyer than he has with a Malay peasant and again following this theory, racialism should be non-existent among Malaysian intellectuals. But racial or communal feeling or antagonism, I notice, is more common among "educated Malaysians" despite of the fact that most of these people went to the same type of schools and learned the same subjects and possess identical social values and aspirations. Chinese and Malay farmers normally seldom talk about communalism, some are not even aware of it and they like Malaysians, until some communal politicians start talking and preaching hatred to them. Communalism must be fought as hard as we had fought Communism. It is an evil that good Malaysians must all fight. Any sign of racial intolerance from any side must be speedily checked. Our salvation is multi-racial harmony and unity. I would like to see educated Malaysians leading the masses in building a truly Malaysian consciousness and nationalism.

Whatever the deliberations of the Conference might be, I have no doubt that you will be mindful that as citizens of this country you must, in your attitude to your job, apply the guidance which

Government in the national interest must apply to the economic sector, of which you, as workers, are a part. I am very confident that you will continue to serve the community and the country in the excellent manner you have done in the past and assist Government to achieve its objectives of national development.

I have great pleasure now in declaring your Conference open.



*Timbalan Perdana Menteri Tun Abdul Razak sedang menyematkan pingat Emas Kesatuan bagi perkhidmatan Cemerlang kepada Encik P.P. Narayanan, Setiausaha Agong Kesatuan Kebangsaan Pekerja-pekerja Ladang, di majlis perasmian pembukaan Persidangan Perwakilan Yang ke 3 Kesatuan Pekerja-pekerja Keretapi Tanah Melayu di Pulau Pinang pada 2 September 1966.*