

SPEECH FOR ROTARY DISTRICT GOVERNOR'S BANQUET ON 26TH NOVEMBER, 1960 AT KUALA LUMPUR

Tuan Haji Mustapha Albakri, Rotarians, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am reminded, after having partaken in this excellent dinner, of the idea some people outside Rotary entertain of Rotarians. They seem to think that Rotary Clubs are formed by successful business and professional men to meet once a week to eat, drink and make merry. Despite this innocent fun to melt away the tiredness of tired business tycoons, so the story goes, their better halves, after having been left alone every Wednesday to eat their lunch at home, become suspicious of their Rotarian husbands, and were not convinced that their Wednesday get-togethers were pure innocent fun. So the husbands put their heads together and came up with a bright idea. They formed the Inner Wheel into which they corralled their wives, who were left to amuse themselves within that circle.

I should like to say to the Delegates from abroad, you are very welcome to our country and to our National Capital. Those of you who have come here for the first time, may have been surprised that Kuala Lumpur, which means muddy estuary, belies its name. There is nothing muddy about its appearance except the colour of the river that flows through the heart of the Federal Capital. Even Rotarians from Singapore and Penang will have to concede the fact that Kuala Lumpur is no longer wrapped up in an out-of-the-way place atmosphere. You have been getting acquainted with Kuala Lumpur for the past few days and I hope you will take home with you happy memories of your stay here.

Your District Governor said yesterday at the opening of your Conference that, though Rotarians in District 330 belonged to 20 nationalities and nine political divisions, spoke different languages and professed different religions, they were imbued with the spirit of service to the communities in which they lived, and to further international understanding, goodwill and friendship.

In our region today there is a greater need than ever of these Rotary ideals. New nations have come into being bringing with them new ideas, new forms of governments, new economic and political systems, and a fresh assessment of international relationship. New ideas and new ways of life are bound to affect the lives of the 200 million people who live in South-east Asia. This new experiment in living is bringing forth a fresh wave of enthusiasm, energy and expectations to the people of this region. As leaders in your respective fields of endeavour, you are in an eminent position to assist in re-orientating the minds of your fellow citizens to the new ways of life.

Here in Malaya we are endeavouring to create a new society in which every citizen will have a place in the Malayan sun. As you know, the development of our country has been lopsided. The western seaboard, because of its close proximity to the trade route of the Straits of Malacca has been developed to the exclusion of other parts of the country during the last hundred years. The Alliance Government has set itself the task of opening up the hinterland for development and settlement so that new towns and villages can be established around new centres of production.

Our Rural Development Programme will provide new homes and means of livelihood to those of our people in the rural areas who have no such homes or livelihood. It will also provide better amenities and better means of livelihood for thousands of families now living from hand to mouth. It is our determination in this Rural Development Programme to give our people a higher and better standard of living than they have ever known before, and by opening up land for productive purpose, not only the National income of our people will be increased. This in short is the objective of Rural Development Programme launched by the Alliance Government.

Some critics abroad have dipped their pens in the ink of sarcasm when they wrote that it was the current fashion for newly independent countries to embark on grandiose schemes of Rural Development but, before they went far enough, the schemes got bogged down through one cause or another. Such a sweeping prediction of failure seems to stem from ignorance of the will and desire of the people of under-developed countries to fend for themselves. In Malaya we are determined to make a success of our Rural Development Programme. As Rotarians you have faith

in a democratic society which fosters private enterprise. Such a society exists in Malaya as you all well know. We in Malaya believe in a free society and free enterprise but we also believe that the less fortunate of our people should be assisted, so that they will have the minimum standard of living which is considered compatible with the dignity of our country and our Nation.

In the endeavour to establish this sort of society in the countries of South-east Asia, the Rotary movement can play an important part. Opportunities exist for Rotarians to translate their ideals into practice in the society in which they live and work. I have no doubt that by practising these ideals the Rotary Movement will contribute to the progress, peace and happiness of the countries represented at the Rotary District 330. I hope in the Conference that you are now having you are able to exchange views and experience obtained in your respective countries. By doing so you will be able to play a greater role in the development and progress of this important region of South-east Asia.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to ask you to drink a toast to the Rotary Movement and the ideals it stands for.