

## YAB TUN ABDUL RAZAK'S SPEECH AT THE CONFERENCE OF NATIONAL WELFARE ON 27TH APRIL 1967

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**My Cabinet Colleague, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I feel that it is an honour for me to be asked to address you this evening.

I also feel that this, your first meeting of this National Council of Social Welfare is a very correct step in the right direction in the development of our country.

As you know, I have just returned from my visit to both Australia and New Zealand, and over the past few years, fulfilling my duties as a Minister, I have visited almost every country in the world including most of the countries in Africa.

Everytime I return, and my plane touches down at Subang Airport, I become more and more convinced, comparing Malaysia with the other countries of the world, that the potential of *our* national development is tremendous provided we make the fullest use of our resources both natural and *human*.

I don't want to talk today of our economic development plan which is designed to make the maximum use of both the *physical* and *financial* potentials of our country.

But I do want to talk today about an equally important aspect of our national development which is the *development of the human resources* which exists here in our country, Malaysia.

This Conference, which I am about to open, is essentially *human*, the getting together of all you people here today who are concerned with the welfare of our people.

I see from your programme that the main object of your conference is to understand the concept of Social Welfare.

Let me give you my version of the concept of Social Welfare within the framework of Parliamentary Democracy.

My concept is a *dual contribution*, both by Government and by individual citizens; firstly, on the government side, included in our current Malaysia Development Plan, the area of social and community services and a variety of programme designed to promote the welfare of our rural and urban population by providing improved housing, community facilities, welfare and other services.

During the period 1961 to 1965, among the major projects completed were a rehabilitation centre for the physically handicapped, Old folks' home, Remand homes, Children's homes and Women and

Girls' Protection centres, together with the day to day work done by the Social Welfare Department and a considerable amount of funds expended from the Lotteries Board.

But, my real definition of Social Welfare is not so much what government does, but the contribution which can be made by voluntary organisation.

And what I mean by voluntary organisations is real, one hundred percent voluntary service.

There has been a tendency in the past for welfare organisations to become glorified "post offices", depending of government funds, and their function being merely to re-distribute government funds; but for a democratic country like ours to survive, we need our voluntary organisations to have functions more than that of a "post office". They must become dynamic and self-reliant.

Let me explain what we need. It is this.

We need economic progress; we need economic prosperity; we need material progress; we need cultural progress; we need educational progress, but even more important in addition to this, we need, each and every one of us from the University Professor, from the voluntary worker down to the unfortunate of our brethren; a psychological change of attitude which will accommodate the resultant changes, thought about by the dynamic implementation of development plans by our Government.

This does not mean that I and my government do not fully appreciate the great work which has already been done by a tremendous numbers of voluntary organisations and voluntary workers throughout our country.

A developing country like ours demands greater initiative and sacrifice in the fields of voluntary services.

Deep in the hearts of our people, both in the rural and urban areas, there is a *living* awareness of development; a new spirit born of the taste of progress and prosperity which we must capture and harness, this new awareness in our new nation. This is the chemistry of development.

You know, however, that in Chemistry, the role of the Catalytic agent is important. One can have all the necessary ingredients for a chemical reaction, but if the *catalyst* is not present, nothing will occur! With the presence of the catalyst, change and reaction take place. I *visualize* voluntary organisations playing the role of the catalyst, becoming the "boosting charge" for development.

To play this role will require a change from the concept of social welfare as narrow public assistance to constructive approach to community organisation in the solution of social problems.

Then, dynamic democratic behaviour as a social force will be unleadshed.

But I must warn you that this chemistry of development to which I am referring is *not* an experiment in a well *controlled laboratory*. We are not dealing with chemicals; we are dealing with *human-beings*; we are not dealing with anorganic agents; we are dealing with human-lives, and human aspirations; we are dealing with *vital life forces*!

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are not engaged in an academic exercise.

Let me put it simply.

I do not pretend to be a social scientist, but I know full well that in the last 20 years the sciences have made enormous progress, from launching missiles to understanding more about what makes human beings behave the way they do.

Given the fact that we know more about human beings, what can we, who are concerned with social welfare, do about developing healthier and more satisfying community, organisation, healthier and more satisfied human – being?

We have a community development programme.

What do our social welfare workers, both within Government and voluntary organisations have to offer these programme?

What can social welfare workers do in a constructive and positive way rather than in a remedial patching up of our social disorder when it occurs.

We in Malaysia are practised in the art of counteracting aggression.

We have shown our ability to ward off militant aggression during the emergency.

We have shown our ability to cope with it effectively during the period of Confrontation.

It seems to me, ladies and gentlemen, there is a parallel here.

Government fundamentally has positive plans with which to serve its citizens, but in the past we were forced, by circumstances, to take patch work action to meet a negative situation, instead of having a full opportunity to go ahead with positive social welfare development.

Social welfare traditionally has confined itself primarily to the narrow concept of public assistance.

We must go beyond this.

As in the case of our positive economic development, we have a positive programme and a definite direction in which we are moving.

So also in our social welfare programme we must be more creative and produce more positive plans.

It seems to me that social welfare must think creatively and constructively about a fresh positive role for itself.

This, I say, is the task for your Conference.

I regard our present national and human endeavour as vital, but only to bring about change for the sake of change, but to bring about change for the well-being and prosperity of our people.

So that the battle for Democracy which is being fought in every Malaysian home and in the hearts of all our citizens will be won!

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have great pleasure in declaring this Conference open.