

OPENING OF THE THIRD COMMONWEALTH EXHIBITION ORGANISED BY THE MALAYAN BRANCH OF THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY ON 24TH MAY, 1965

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today 24th May, is Commonwealth Day and all over the world commemoration functions are being held by people representing over one quarter of the entire population of the world.

Here in Malaysia, thanks to the initiative and foresight of our beloved Prime Minister¹, who in 1962 suggested the formation of this branch, we are now able to celebrate as full and equal members of the Commonwealth together with our brothers and sisters in the other Commonwealth countries.

I am very pleased to be here this evening and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Malayan Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society for its enterprise in presenting yet another Commonwealth Exhibition here in our national capital city. One of the main objects of this Society is to bring about a better understanding among the people of the Commonwealth and I think that exhibitions such as this are an excellent way of enhancing the goodwill and understanding that members of the Commonwealth share with one another. When one is studying the Commonwealth, it is useful to be quite clear in our mind what in fact it is. I do not think that one would have a definition of the Commonwealth because in many ways it defies that definition. One Commonwealth Statesman some time ago described Commonwealth as an unorganised organisation. There is no constitutional or legal tie that binds together countries of the Commonwealth. Countries that form the Commonwealth are spread throughout the entire world presenting a population of over 750 million people. Among these millions are to be found people of every race and creed all held together by bond of friendship and goodwill and belief in common ideals of freedom and justice. As a member of the Commonwealth and as a member of the United Nations, we in Malaysia are proud of the fact that our country symbolises the true spirit of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. As our country is one that men and women of all creeds and colours, men and women of all races live in harmony, in justice and in happiness and goodwill with one another. To those who do not agree with our way of life I say

¹Y.T.M. Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj.

"go somewhere else which is more to your liking and leave us in peace to fashion our own destiny. That is all we ask!"

As I said Commonwealth defies definition because it is a group of nations out of their own free will with the common ideals of the people. Therefore to strengthen the ties of the Commonwealth we must fashion goodwill and friendship among the people at all levels, in professions among the business people, among the school children and among people at all levels. All of us realise that if we want to go on in the world today apart from hard work, we have got to live in the spirit of peace, friendship and mutual help with our fellowmen. Unfortunately, much as we wish to, we Malaysians are not being permitted to live in peace. Our nation is being forced to defend its national integrity and independence against blatant and shameful aggression by our unprincipled neighbour Indonesia, the regime in Jakarta without any provocation as for the last two years carried out policy of maturity political economic confrontations. In this hour of our national crises we have been fortunate as a member of the Commonwealth, we can look to our fellow members for assistance. Commonwealth forces are standing shoulder to shoulder with our own troops along our borders of Sabah and Sarawak, in the air and on the high seas, beating back and defeating every attempt that Indonesia has made to invade and disrupt our country.

I would like to take this opportunity, to once again express our thanks to our friends in the Commonwealth for their help and support at this time of crisis for our young country. Therefore we Malaysians have very good reasons to know from practical experience the full definition from being a member of the Commonwealth and the entire feeling of friendship and cooperation that exist among its members. Hardly a week passes by without some sign of this friendly attitude, in trade, in defence, in cultural exchange, in conferences, in the Colombo Plan, in scholarships and travel and in personal encounters both here and overseas. Probably the most outstanding example to arise from this desire of the Commonwealth countries to help one another is the Colombo Plans, a scheme which has been so successful that today it extends to others outside the Commonwealth. This great plan is designed to prove a channel for the "haves" to help the "have-nots". Malaysia is proud to be both a contributor and receiver member of the plan.

I am very pleased to hear that this Branch in addition to organising an annual exhibition, also organises an annual Essay Competition, open to all young Malaysian of the age of 19 or under.

If there is one field above all others, in which there is a tremendous opportunity for constructive action in the Commonwealth it is in the field of youth. An Essay Competition on a Commonwealth subject is an excellent way to encourage young people to acquire a greater knowledge of the Commonwealth and the advantage which membership brings.

Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you and the members of this Branch for your enterprise and enthusiasm. By organising this exhibition you are helping people in this country, who have no chance to travel abroad, to see and to appreciate the arts and crafts of other members of the Commonwealth.

It is my hope that many people will take the opportunity to visit this exhibition and it gives me great pleasure to declare it open.