

**SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING
OF THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND
MARKETING SEMINAR ORGANISED BY FAMA
ON 13TH NOVEMBER 1967**

**Mr. Chairman, the Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture and Co-operative,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a great pleasure for me this morning to be invited to open this Seminar on Marketing.

Firstly, I would like to welcome our guest from overseas who have come here to join us in our discussions and I hope that not only will your discussions be fruitful but also your stay in Malaysia will also be pleasant and worthwhile.

Looking at your Seminar Programme, I see that there are four main items for discussion –

- the role of Marketing in Agriculture Development
- the role of Government in Agriculture Marketing;
- the role of a Federal Agriculture and Marketing Authority; and
- the role of Farmers' Associations in the marketing of their Agricultural Produce.

I have no wish delay the starting of your discussions by making a long and tedious speech, but I would like to ask **one question**, and perhaps this Seminar can deliberate on the correct answer to this question!

How can a country which depends, during its present stage of Development on the production of natural commodities, mostly produced by smallholders, **evolve a system of marketing** which will ensure that **the rural producer can obtain a fair and just price** for the produce of his smallholding and thus have a chance of maintaining a decent and reasonable standard of living.

As you know, we in Malaysia have a Development Plan designed not only to give us **industrial growth** but also to achieve, we hope, a **dynamic agricultural diversification** programme so that progress in our towns and urban areas will therefore go hand-in-hand with progress in our rural areas, so that our people, whether they be urban or rural, have a fair chance and equal opportunities towards attaining a decent standard of living and a decent way of life.

What do we mean by a decent way of life?

We believe, in Malaysia that the Communist way of life is not decent, and that one of the first steps towards eliminating the possibility of Communism is to **eliminate poverty**, and our Development Plan is designed to produce a balance of benefits, and a reasonable standard of living for both our urban and rural people.

So, therefore, it is my view that the real object of Government in playing an important part in Agriculture Marketing, is to help raise and stabilise the standard

of living of the rural population which is dependent for their livelihood on the production of their **primary** agricultural products.

I realise that in the context of achieving economic growth one cannot take the subject of Agricultural Marketing in isolation.

In the world today we are going through a phase of over-specialisation, and I notice particularly in the present-day Technical Aid Programmes.

In the forefront of the worldscene today are events usually discussed under the various headings, "Political", "Economic" and "Social". These classifications tend to be treated separately by Political Scientists, Economists and Sociologists.

In other words, a Specialist specializes, that is to say, he restricts his activities to one area disclaiming all competence in other areas.

As a result, we often find, when we add together all the experts' interpretations of a given problem, whether it be in the field of Agricultural Diversification or Industrial Development, we possess a wealth of opinions covering many aspects of the subjects **in great detail**, but **lacking** concurring features that would enable us to form a coherent picture of the total situation or to be able to perceive and produce a proper plan of action to solve our economic problems.

In other words, we are suffering today from what I call a "time lag" between **economic theory** and **development practice**; we are also suffering from a lack of cohesion in the application **economic expertise**, probably as a result of over-specialisation in the various academic disciplines which comprise an integral part of basic economic planning; as a result, unfortunately, it is difficult to get a development innovation integrated towards a common aim; towards economic growth.

This lack of cohesion, in my opinion, applies equally to the subject which is the main subject of this Seminar – Agricultural Marketing.

This time lag is a luxury we can ill afford.

Therefore, it is my view that in your deliberations and in your discussions, in this Seminar, that a definite attempt must be made to examine the problems which must be overcome in order to produce a sound system of marketing.

And all these problems are inter-related, economic, social and political!

People talk about revolution; the revolution of change!

The changing of attitudes, the changing of approaches, the changing of methods, and the changing of systems, in keeping with the pace of progress, and in keeping with the ability to adjust thinking and action, particularly, in a developing country.

We must obtain the maximum results from an **enlightened development policy**; a policy which can be applied, and applied quickly, on the ground in the rural areas, in order to give our people a sensible and sustained economy, and to be able to reap the benefits of a **higher standard of living**.

As you have probably already guessed, I am no Economist, but I have acquired a lot of experience in the field of National Development.

My experience has taught me that it is quite easy to build up the necessary infra-structure for a fairly sound economy in both the rural and urban areas.

But, however, what is more difficult, and to my mind, more important, is the task of introducing a change; change of attitudes, change of methods, change of systems, change of concepts and all other changes necessary towards definite economic growth.

This challenge of introducing change amongst our people requires not only the application of the academic disciplines of Economics, but also requires the application of the principles of two other sciences Political Sciences, Social Science together with a modicum of sound Psychology.

The introduction of change in a developing country much as ours, and particularly, the innovations associated with economic development, in most cases, involves contact between people from a predominantly industrial culture or from people, experts and economists, who have been educated in a more modern way, and a more modern society, than the people with whom they have to deal with in applying theories; people who, in the rural areas, are closer to nature, closer to the soil, and attach less importance to material gains and consumer goods.

An expert who attempts to introduce innovations brings with him not only technical information, in his own field, but also a set of deeply-rooted ideals about utility of economic growth and the benefits of a higher standard of living.

Consciously, he is often hardly aware of the picture which he is trying to convey to the rural people with whom he is concerned. He is also seldom aware that in fact his economic theories may cut across the whole value-system of the area in which he is working.

If the benefit that the expert brings through increasing production is not to be **offset** by the damage to the individual and his society, it is essential that his beliefs should affect his technical advice, as little as possible, and that he should be willing to compromise, within the essentials of the mosaic of modern development.

The success of the expert's impression cannot be measured only by the **rise in production** that results; the effect in non-economic life must also be examined – only too often the latter factor is ignored because it cannot be accurately measured!

Economic growth is a very necessary goal for a developing country, but it must not be considered to out-weigh all other goals nor should it be assumed that every action which increases wealth is necessarily right!

Economic development will only be satisfactory if it acts to preserve the meaning of life – not to destroy it!

Therefore, I feel it is necessary in examining the problems of Agricultural Marketing to examine all aspects of Marketing, Social, Economic, Productive and Political.

One cannot establish a really first class marketing system to help raise the standard of our rural economy merely by passing a few bits of new legislation through Parliament; or by writing page after page of economic theory; or by expounding at length in discussions the theoretical solutions. We have got to close the gap between theory and practice and produce more dynamic plane for positive action!

What to my mind is required is a thorough examination of the whole system of Marketing, viewed not in the light of what has been successful in the richer and more developed countries, but viewed rather in the light of problems which beset a developing country, and, particularly, a country developing within the framework of a Democracy.

Looking at the list of participants in this Seminar, I notice that you are a fairly high-powered professional and academic group.

I myself am a Politician. It has been said that Academicians survive because of their brains; Politicians, on the other hand, survive on votes! Democracy, particularly, in this part of South East Asia will survive on its ability to produce modern and new ideas designed to raise the standard of living of its people.

I hope, therefore, Gentlemen, that your deliberations and discussions in this Seminar will result in the outcome of some good sound and sensible ideas to solve the problems of Agricultural Marketing in this area, and, at the same time, contribute to a higher standard of living of our rural people, thus putting another nail into the coffin of Communism, and spell out a Marketing system to give new hope for our democratic way of life here in Malaysia.