

SPEECH BY THE CHIEF MINISTER AT THE OPENING OF THE FIFTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF BRANCHES OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KUALA LUMPUR ON 30TH AUGUST, 1957

Mr. President, Your Excellency and fellow members.

It gives me great pleasure to see representatives of Branches of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association gathered in Kuala Lumpur to participate in the Merdeka Celebrations and to attend Conference, the fifth of its kind held by the Branches of the Association in the Malaya/Borneo region.

I should explain briefly that these Conferences originated from an informal meeting held in Singapore on the 23rd April, 1952, among representatives of Branches representing Singapore, North Borneo, Sarawak and the Federation of Malaya with a view to holding meetings and regional conferences to discuss and exchange views on matters of common concern and interest. Since then Conferences have been held in Jesselton, North Borneo, in January, 1953; in Kuala Lumpur, Federation of Malaya, in September of the same year; in Kuching, Sarawak, in April 1954; and lastly in Singapore in 1956. Delegates to these Conferences discussed and exchanged views on subjects of common concern and interest, and I am sure they returned to their territories greatly strengthened in their belief in the co-operation for the benefit of all.

Now, perhaps I should explain that in the ordinary course this Conference should have been held in Jesselton, North Borneo, as agreed at the last Singapore Conference, but the North Borneo Branch kindly offered to defer its turn in favour of our Branch in order to enable their members to attend the Merdeka Celebrations. We are grateful for this offer but at the same time we are conscious that in the present circumstances we are unable to provide adequately all the amenities and facilities and comfort which they should by right have. I trust you will overlook our

shortcomings occasioned by the large number of visitors here. We have had also, very reluctantly, to limit the number of delegates and observers participating in the Conference from each territory, but this, I am sure, will not detract in any way from the benefits and purpose of this Conference.

Having now briefly sketched the origin and purpose of regional conferences, may I say a few words on the significance of being a member of the Commonwealth. As you know, the Federation of Malaya is on the eve of independence and tomorrow all its inhabitants will rejoice and celebrate this happy event. I felt very much inspired and deeply stirred by the sight of so many parliamentary representatives from various parts of the Commonwealth assembled in Kuala Lumpur to take part in our Merdeka celebrations. To one and all I say, "Thank You" from the bottom of my heart.

Tomorrow a new chapter opens in our relationship with Great Britain: the protected status will give place to full equality as a member of this great family of the Commonwealth. We hope to make our just contribution towards the well-being, peace and prosperity of the Commonwealth nations, as a new nations, we realise the various problems which face us but fortified by the belief that this great family of the Commonwealth will always extend to us a helping hand, we have confidence in ourselves. We accept our new role as a new nation with great determination and courage. We will do all we can to play our part

in promoting the peace and goodwill among the free nations of the world.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will always remain the link within the various members of the Commonwealth family and the conference which we hold from year to year will provide opportunities for us to know one another, to exchange views and to make recommendations for the good of the world. Let this conference go on and continue for the good of this great family in the future. We on our part will do all we can to help make it a success it richly deserves.

I would like to extend my very warm welcome to all our friends who have come to attend this meeting. As I said earlier, any shortcomings which they may meet will, I hope, be accepted

in a sporting spirit. I would have like to give them my individual attention but in the circumstances they would, I am sure, appreciate my difficulty in view of the fact that I have had to attend to the varied programmes connected with our celebration.

Finally, I would like to say that your presence here demonstrates beyond doubt the goodwill and friendship that exist among us and this kind gesture is reciprocated. I trust that during your visit here you will be able to appreciate the warm welcome of the Malayan people and that your stay will be a pleasant one.

I wish this Conference every success.