

Create the Future We Want



(RAKAN Sarawak's series of interviews with the STATE SECRETARY)

RS RAKAN Sarawak : It's the end of the year, and as usual, it's time for some moments of reflections on the year that was. What are the things that you are most proud of over the last year as far as the Sarawak civil service is concerned?

YB DATUK AMAR WILSON BAYA DANDOT (STATE SECRETARY):

I believe that we have imparted a sense of urgency among our civil servants, and that most of us recognize that in order to provide the best service, time is of the essence. We have also seen a greater degree of collaboration not only among the civil servants within the same departments and agencies, but also in terms of inter-department cooperation. And I am also pleased to commend the efforts of some of our agencies and departments who have strengthened their collaborative efforts with the private sector and nongovernmental organizations

"Most managers manage for yesterday's conditions, because yesterday is where they got their experiences and successes. But management is about tomorrow, not yesterday."

to facilitate the implementation of development projects in their respective Divisions.

We also have a renewed sense of reverence for the civil service institution and what it means to a free, democratic and progressive society that we enjoy in our country.

I believe that as we reminded ourselves throughout the year of the basic and simple things about our noble

vocation as civil servants, we have this renewed sense of pride and commitment to serving the general public to the best of our abilities. One indication of that is our renewed commitment towards inculcating a culture of maintenance and cleanliness because we are custodians of the public's assets and resources.

RS RAKAN Sarawak : What is the paramount thing that the Sarawak civil service needs to work on harder this year to change or improve? How should the civil servants view their role as far as making these changes happen and in terms of managing this process of change?

STATE SECRETARY : Theodore Levitt of the Harvard Business School once said that "most managers manage for yesterday's conditions, because yesterday is where they got their experiences and successes. But management is about tomorrow, not yesterday."

by Learning to Manage for



This means that those in the management positions in our civil service must be the first to change, and that change starts from the mental paradigm that they base their actions and decisions on. Oftentimes, we look at our past successes or accomplishments, and we get comfortable in merely repeating the same experiences. We apply the same approach, the same procedures, same methods in what we are doing, and needless to say, we get the same results. As long as we do not slip back in our performance standards, and we are maintaining the status quo, we are happy and satisfied.

But, in this day and age, we need to get out of this mindset if we are to survive obsolescence. Everything around us is changing so rapidly, and only those who have the acuity to think and make decisions based on how they want “tomorrow” to be like – the shape of things to come- will most certainly survive and continue to succeed.

Changes in laws and regulations, demographics, technology, ecology, and in public opinion constantly happen, and we must not be caught dead unaware by these changes.

However, if we operate with a mindset based on what we envision tomorrow to be like, we would sometimes end up making decisions contrary to present-day’ popular opinion. As a leader, we sometimes have to take actions whose results will not be known for years to come. But we can only prove our capacity as leaders when we are prepared to make such decisions.

One of the best examples of these kinds of leaders is our Chief Minister, YAB Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud. I was reading the compilations of his speeches last year, and the ideas he has and decisions he made, say, 20 years ago, are way ahead of its time then. But he has been proven right as we can see the results of those decisions in the resulting progress and development

that Sarawak has achieved since then. And he still continues to see far into the future, and still has the audacity to make decisions based on what he believes Sarawak’s place should be within the Malaysian Federation as well as in the world’s arena of developed nations 20 or 30 years from now.

Next year, 2008, is a very exciting year for all Sarawakians. We will be commemorating the State 45th year of independence via the formation of Malaysia. There are so much that we can look back to, and be proud of our achievements over the last 45 years.

But we must also recognise that we can only create the future that we want when we have the boldness and the conviction to make decisions not based on our past successes but based on how we envision the shape of things to come.