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SPEECH BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR ROBERT BLACK,
AT THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE ROYAL INSTI-
TUTION OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS, AT THE SEA
VIEW HOTEL, AT 9.30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE
19, 1957.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very glad that the Malaya Branch of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors decided that its Branch had become of a sufficiently august nature to invite my wife and myself to attend the dinner this evening. If it had continued to prefer to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the jungle air, my wife and I would have missed this opportunity of enjoying an excellent dinner and of meeting you all this evening.

I note that your Vice Chairman, whatever the modesty of the Malaya Branch may be, is fully capable when he is on his feet of going into the attack and of laying about him, notably at the expense of the architects. I have no doubt that the latter, whether or not they be old-fashioned, can look after themselves and I do not propose to intervene in any robust rivalry. So often it is the person who intervenes with the best of good intentions who receives the blows.

I suppose it is true, in some degree at any rate, that the functions of surveyors are less well known to the average layman than those of many other professions. As your Chairman has already pointed out, they do not, like architects or engineers, leave any monolithic monuments for posterity either to admire or deplore. They do not, like lawyers, come to our notice fighting legal battles in the Courts.

They do not, like doctors, come into our private lives and homes or, like accountants, feature prominently in our business and financial affairs, not least in advising on the completion of our income tax returns. To most people, surveyors mean the men who make maps - a fascinating art - but of course they are very much else besides. The surveyors are essentially experts, impartial technical advisers on all matters connected with the planning, management and value of land, what goes on it and what lies under it.

I do not myself claim to be one of the laymen who have been unaware of the great contribution which the profession of Chartered Surveyors has made to the community. As a member of the Administrative Service in the Malay States before the war, and as a Land Officer, I worked with members of the Government Survey Departments. I am glad to have this opportunity of paying my tribute to those men who were my colleagues, for their integrity, for their industry and for their high degree of technical skill. There are one or two here this evening who have been my colleagues in the past. Mr. Himely, who is now Surveyor-General in the Federation of Malaya, and his wife were friends of ours when we served together in Pahang and it is a great pleasure to see them again this evening after the lapse of years. Mr. Walker Taylor, who is now in charge of the Survey Department in Singapore,

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is another old colleague of mine from Pahang days and, again, it is a pleasure for my wife and myself to see him and his wife here as old friends of ours. With your Chairman I have not had such direct professional contacts, but I can vouch for his skill and determination as a golfer and as a very worthy representative of a fine country which has given Malaya many outstanding surveyors in the past.

In view of the association of the Royal Engineers with the Institution, I think that it would not be inappropriate for me to say how much we in so many of the territories which are members of our Commonwealth have owed to the very fine topographical survey work which the Royal Engineers have carried out over many years now.

I recollect, during my period as Assistant Adviser in Kluang in Johore more than 20 years ago, having in my district the Headquarters of a very energetic team of Sappers led by a Captain who is now Major General Wansbrough-Jones.

The first notable act of surveying in Britain was the compilation of Domesday Book. William the First directed its preparation so that he could have a record of all the land in England, of its ownership and of the numbers and type of people who lived on it with the crops they produced. It was a major work of surveying and was remarkable in its thoroughness and accuracy. It provided an intelligible basis for taxation and a census for the estimation of men available in time of war.

As interrogations had to be made and taxation was involved, it was not unnatural that the public took a poor view of the survey and the name Domesday epitomised in their eyes a survey which was like unto the great reckoning on the Day of Judgment. Nevertheless, this priceless document, preserved to this day, contains the data which enabled William the First to establish and consolidate his control over a very unsettled country and is a very tangible tribute, if indeed any were required, to the value of the surveyor's work.

It was not until 800 year later, however, that surveying developed as a recognised profession. This was when the Industrial Revolution brought into prominence the problems of acquiring land for railways and expanding towns and the development of England's coal and iron resources. The Revolution, which brought in its train so many changes, created an urgent need for expert independent judges to decide on fair prices for the land which had to be acquired, and so this Institution came into being.

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors was founded to develop and protect the technical and practical qualifications of surveyors and to ensure a high standard of professional conduct and integrity in the interests of the community.

The professions have been wise in forming the Institutions which have enabled them to maintain the highest standards of integrity in their professions by the imposition of a corporate discipline and an esprit de corps. With the snowball expansion in the amount of planning and work to be done by developing communities and in face of the complications of that planning, it is important indeed that all professions involved should maintain high standards of professional conduct, and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, by the high standards it demands of its members, renders a great service to the public.

The Malaya Branch, besides setting up a technical library for the use of members and students, is also supplying lecturers for a course for surveyors which is being organised at the Singapore Polytechnic so that the examinations of the Institution may be taken there. It is significant that students and probationers from about 30% of the Royal Institution in Malaya, which reflects great credit on it and demonstrates both its energy in these territories and its wisdom in recognising the need to attract and train local men in the essential skills of surveying and in the highest traditions of the profession.

And now, on behalf of my wife and all of those who are our fellow guests this evening, including the architects whom I must congratulate on their restraint in permitting Mr. Seah to regain his seat unharmed, I thank our hosts for their generous hospitality this evening and I offer our very best wishes for the prosperity and success of all who are members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

JUNE 19, 1957.

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