

Should the government provide health care

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Dato' Sir Onn bin Ja'afar, KBE (1895 - January 19, 1962) was a Malay politician and a Menteri Besar (Chief Minister) of Johore in Malaysia, then Malaya. He was the founder of United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and was also responsible for the social economic welfare of the Malays by setting up the Rural Industrial Development Authority (RIDA). His son was Tun Hussein Onn, the third Prime Minister of Malaysia and his grandson is Hishammuddin Hussein, currently the Minister of Defence and also the acting Minister of Transportation in the Malaysian Cabinet.

Malay nationalism and politics

Early Malay nationalism took root in Johor during the 1920s as Onn Jaafar, whom Sultan Ibrahim had treated as an adopted son, became a journalist and wrote articles on the welfare of the Malays. Some of Onn's articles were critical of Sultan Ibrahim's policies, which led to a strained personal relations with the Sultan. In particular, Sultan Ibrahim expelled Onn from Johor after he published an article in the Sunday Mirror, a Singapore-based English tabloid, which criticised the Sultan's poor treatment of the Johor Military Forces personnel and the welfare of the Orang Asli.

Onn became very popular after he continued to cover issues on Malay grievances, and Sultan Ibrahim invited Onn to return to Johor in 1936. [1] Along with his companions, Haji Anwar bin Abdul Malik, Haji Syed Alwi bin Syed Sheikh al-Hadi and Mohamad Noah Omar, they founded the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) as a means to rally the Malays against the Malayan Union, which was perceived as threatening Malay privileges and the position of the Malay rulers. Onn took up the role of UMNO's president on May 1, 1946.

Malayan Union The Malayan Union proposal provided that United Kingdom had full administrative powers over the Malay states except in areas pertaining to Islamic customs. The Malays strongly protested against the treaties, as the treaties had the effect of circumscribing the spiritual and moral authority of the Malay rulers, which the Malays held high esteem over it. Communal tensions between the Malays and Chinese were high, and the prospect of granting citizenship to non-Malays was deemed unacceptable to the Malays.

In particular, politicians in Johor were extremely unhappy with the willingness of Sultan Ibrahim to sign the treaties with Harold MacMichael, and voiced out that the Sultan had violated the terms in the Johor state constitution which explicitly forbade any foreign powers to assume legitimate control over the state. In early February 1946, seven political dissidents led by Awang bin Hassan organised a rally to protest against the Sultan's decision for signing the treaties, and Onn Jaafar, who was then serving as a district officer in Batu Pahat, was invited to attend the rally.

The rally was held on 1 February 1946 at the Sultan Abu Bakar State Mosque, and protesters shouted nationalistic slogans and called for the dethronement of Sultan Ibrahim. Malay nationalistic slogans were raised during the rally, many of whom were directed against the Sultan himself, whom they accused him for committing treason against the Malay race by signing the treaties. News of the rally reached the Sultan Ibrahim on 22 February, who was then residing at Grosvenor House in London.

Sultan Ibrahim approached the colonial office and expressed his withdrawal of support for the proposal scheme, but this did not appease the political

dissidents and Onn continued to organise more rallies in the other Malay states to muster further support for his calls against the Malayan Union, and formed United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) in May. [4] To appease the Malays and the UMNO leaders, including Onn himself, Sultan Ibrahim personally donated a lump sum of \$5, 000 to UMNO and Onn was appointed the Menteri Besar of Johor in 1946.

The establishment of the Federation of Malaya did not go down well with the ethnic Chinese, whereby favourable conditions for obtaining citizenship for the Chinese and other non-Malays were withdrawn. The Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) was formed in 1949 under the leadership of a Straits Chinese businessman, Tan Cheng Lock who frequently raised grievances over the citizenship terms that were set when the Federation was established.

As a result, communal tensions between the Malays and Chinese surfaced, and Onn kept his distance from Tan. Tan encountered initial difficulties with meeting Sultan Ibrahim, who was not accustomed to working with Chinese businessmen. Sultan Ibrahim also became increasingly disappointed in Onn's work commitment, whom he saw as neglecting state affairs as a result of his commitments towards UMNO. In early 1950, Sultan Ibrahim approached Onn, who was asked to choose between committing his efforts for UMNO and the state.

Onn chose to the former, and resigned as the Menteri Besar of Johor in May. [7] Leaving UMNO[edit] In later years, Onn became increasingly disgusted with what he considered to be UMNO's race based communalist policies, and called for party membership to be opened to all Malaysians, and for UMNO to

be renamed as the United Malays National Organisation. When his recommendations went unheeded, he left the party on August 26, 1951, to form the Independence of Malaya Party (IMP).

However, the IMP failed to receive sufficient backing from Malaysians, and eventually Onn left it to form the Parti Negara, which placed membership restrictions on non-Malays in an attempt to woo the Malays. He finally won a seat in the Malayan parliament in the 1959 elections under his new party. Neither party gained popular support against Tunku Abdul Rahman's new Alliance coalition and he was eventually eclipsed from Malayan political life.