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Brave New World

First published in [The Star Online](#)

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AH ... the social contract — a theory propounded by the philosopher Hobbes where the citizens of a country agrees to give power to a government in exchange for the guarantee of their own civil liberties and rights.

It is a term meant to dictate a type of governance where the needs of a powerful authority are balanced by the protection of citizens from abuse of that power. In this Hobbesian philosophy we find a weapon against tyranny.

But this is not so in Malaysia. The term “social contract” has been hijacked by those who choose to invent their own meaning of the expression. When “social contract” is used on these shores, it means that Malay political power must always hold sway and a state of perpetual pro-Malay economic policies must remain in place and everyone else must keep quiet as their forefathers had agreed to it.

The founders of this country did not have such racist aspirations when we obtained our independence in 1957. The provisions in the Constitution which provides for the “special position” of the Malays and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak (note there is no such thing as “Malay rights” in our Constitution), were meant as a stop gap measure but not a permanent crutch.

Tun Dr Ismail likened it to a gold handicap where you give the weaker party a boost until he reaches a point where he can play on equal terms. Indeed the time limit initially set was for the affirmative action to last 20 years.

But hey, don't take my word for it. Allow me to regale you with some quotes that can be found in the Report of the Federation of Malaya Constitutional Commission "... in an independent Malaya all nationals should be accorded equal rights, privileges and opportunities and there must not be discrimination on grounds of race and creed ..."

And the people who said this were not the British and their pompous hats. It was the Alliance which in case you have forgotten who they were, consisted of the Malayan In-dian Congress, the Malayan Chinese Association and the United Malay National Organisation. That's right our great leaders of Umno hoped and dreamt of a Malaya based on equality. And you can see this aspiration reflected in the Constitution. Article 8 guarantees equality except in situations specifically provided for in the Constitution. In other words, if an affirmative action is not specifically allowed for in the Constitution, it is unlawful.

And there are other provisions as well; like Article 136 which states that all government servants must not be discriminated against based on race and creed. So our non-Malay public servants have a Constitutional protection against poor treatment for example in promotions. I don't see all these "warriors for the social contract" waving placards demanding impartial treatment to all civil servants. Of course not, it would not do to defend the non-Malays, will it?

By the way, it is not only the politicians who wanted a country where there is racial equality, the rulers, our Sultans themselves said that they "... look forward to a time not too remote when it will become possible to eliminate communalism as a force in the political and economic life of the country".

But in case you think I am making this up, it's in the report mentioned above on page 71. Check it out yourself.

So the next time some ex-premier, or multi-millionaire Malay, or racist rhetoric politician, go on and on about the "social contract", please be informed that this kind of self-serving bigoted behaviour was not part of the dream that is independent Malaya. Our founders did not have such base ideals they wanted better, and so should we.