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In Search Of The Social Meaning Of Communication Satellites

By

M Alwi Dahlan
IN SEARCH OF THE SOCIAL MEANING
OF COMMUNICATION SATELLITES

BY : M. ALWI DAHLAN
Chairman, Steering Committee
President, ISKI

Please allow me first of all, to speak on behalf of the
Organizers of the Seminar, particularly the Department of In-
formation and the Indonesian Communication Association (ISKI).
We feel privileged to have all of you here with us today to
attend this Seminar. We would like to extend our warmest wel-
come and most sincere appreciation for your willingness to
spare your time and energy, and to share your knowledge and
experience in the three days to come.

We are also very pleased with the response and interest
shown in the Seminar. Originally, it was intended to be a
small undertaking but at the last count more than 50 persons
have registered as participants and observers, although we
have tried to keep the numbers down. This total does not in-
clude the 13 who will present papers concerning various as-
psects of communication satellites. This high response indi-
cates that we have selected a topic which are truly important
and relevant, in the context of today's need as well as fu-
ture perspectives.

This Seminar is distinctive in other ways, too. First,
it is jointly organized by three different organizations or
institutions, each with its own characteristics. The Depart-
ment of Information is a national government body; its interest
in communication lies in the operational aspects of govern-
ment information dissemination. AMIC is a private, interna-
tional organization interested in the development of mass com-
munications in the Asian region. Whether ISKI is a non govern-
mental organization interested in developing academic and
scholastic capabilities in the broader field of communication.
Yet, all three join hands because we realized that in order to be able to meet the challenges brought by technological change in the future, we can no longer work alone, separately, but have to cooperate and assist each other. We at ISKI and I like to direct this especially to H.E. the Minister, hope that such cooperation will continue after this Seminar is over.

There is another distinction of this Seminar, i.e. that it links the hardware and the software, people, the practitioners with the observers, the engineers and the social scientists. (We even have among our midst the representative of parliament/DPR). With the rapid advances in communication technology, there is a gap between the two groups - and the gap appears to be growing. One extreme frequently speaks about the wonder of technology in need a manner as if neglecting the social implications of technology and the meaning of technology for the wellbeing of mankind and society. Another extreme speaks of technology only in terms of its negative impact, as if the purpose of technology is to bring misery and evil to people. And then there are others who told or rather reacted, to technology without a clean understanding.

The theme of this Seminar makes it possible for us to widen our respective horizons. It facilitates of what it is all about a common outlook for both sides. By focusing attention to the satellite's function as an equaliser, we can look both at the technical as well as the social benefits of the technology.

In my opinion, the satellite is not only an information equaliser in the physical or technical sense of the term. However it could also be an equaliser in the social sense, i.e. an equaliser of opportunities - be it social, economic, political or cultural opportunities. In that way, communication satellites could become a means for wider equity or equality not a means to promote, or at least, to keep social economic discrepancies.
That is the reason why we pay special interest to this Seminar. Especially for us at ISKI, and I hope this to be true also for the other participants, this Seminar could help our effort in searching and finding the social meaning of communication technology - in this instance, communication satellites.

The Steering Committee hopes that discussion could lead toward increasing the role of the satellites as an equaliser in all aspects of life and development.

Looking at the names who will speak and participate at this Seminar, we hope that this exercise could come with fresh idea which would help achieve our goals.

With that in mind, we thank all of you again for your participation in this Seminar.

Please also allow me to express a word of appreciation to the government of Central Java and the city of Solo through the Governor Mr. Ismail. I am sure that all the participants are very pleased with the charm of your people.

Specially for H.E. The Minister of Information: we are very grateful that you are able to come and be with us in this first session of the Seminar. The Steering Committee hope that you would be kind to open the Seminar officially after your opening address today.

Thank you.