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SPEECH BY DR ONG CHIT CHUNG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (HOME AFFAIRS & LABOUR) AND MP FOR BUKIT BATOK, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR THE SEMINAR ON "POWER PRESS SAFETY" ORGANISED BY THE SINGAPORE NATIONAL EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL AND THE JAPANESE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY & HEALTH ASSOCIATION, HELD ON 31 JUL 92 AT 9 AM AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL, MANDARIN BALLROOM 1, 6TH FLOOR, SOUTH WING.

President, SNEF, Chairman of the Organising  
Committee, Ladies & Gentlemen

Good Morning

I am pleased to be here today to officiate at the opening of this seminar on power press safety.

Power presses are widely used in our factories. Everyday, thousands of workers work with these machines. Unfortunately,

**inexperienced and careless handling of power presses have resulted in serious accidents involving permanent disablement.**

**For instance, last year alone, there was a total of thirty-one permanent disablement accident cases involving power presses. They constituted about a quarter of all permanent disablement cases reported to the Department of Industrial Safety of the Ministry of Labour.**

**As safety for workers is of utmost importance, it is vital that our workers are taught and practise the correct methods of working these power presses, while at the**

same time management ensure that these machines are safe to use.

Over the years, much efforts have been made to ensure that power presses are safe. We have come a long way from the early days of industrialisation when most of our power presses were devoid of safety guards. Then, workers were expected on their own to keep their hands and fingers from coming into contact with certain dangerous parts of the machines.

Inspectors from the Department of Industrial Safety had to enforce the law which required the guarding of all dangerous

parts of the power presses. Owners of factories with power presses that were dangerous were prosecuted and fined. For the recalcitrants, stop work orders were issued to prohibit the use of the unsafe presses.

However, I am happy to say that these efforts have borne fruits. Today, the situation has improved significantly. The managements are now more enlightened. They are more aware of their responsibilities to safeguard the safety and health of their workers. It is increasingly rare to discover a factory where the dangerous parts of power presses or other machinery are exposed and

pose a danger to workers. Nevertheless, we must continue to put safety first, and not slacken in our efforts to improve the working environment of workers.

Investigations conducted by the Department of Industrial Safety revealed that an increasing number of permanent disablement accidents occur when workers tamper with the guards provided or during maintenance of presses when the guards are removed. Many accidents also happen when the power press malfunctions, while the press is being activated. All these mishaps indicate that there is more to power press safety than the mere provision of

guards for the machine.

We need to adopt an integrated approach. Besides the provision of guards, there must be regular inspections and maintenance to ensure that all parts of the press are functioning properly. There must also be proper training for the operators of power presses and their supervisors. The operators and supervisors should be given training on how to carry out regular inspections themselves. They should be drilled on the essential safety measures.

To equip power press operators and their supervisors with the necessary

knowledge on power press safety, the Ministry of Labour will introduce a special course on the safe operation and maintenance of power presses. The course, which will be launched in October this year, is designed to familiarise supervisors and power press operators on the hazardous parts of power presses, how to conduct daily inspection and testing of power presses and how to promote safe working practices with power presses.

It is a one-day course of 8-hour duration. A minimum charge of \$50 will be levied per participant. Supervisors and power press operators are encouraged to

attend the course.

I am pleased to note that the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) has, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the National Trades Union Congress, organised a mission to visit Japan from 24 Nov 91 to 7 Dec 91 to study the Japanese self-regulatory systems and measures for power press safety. The aim was to see how we could develop a similar system in Singapore.

I understand that the study mission will present its reports and disseminate its findings at this seminar. I am sure



participants of this seminar will be able to benefit from the findings of the study mission.

I must say that regulations, rules, training and seminars can only do that much. More important, workers at the workplace must themselves be safety conscious, put what they learn into practice, day in and day out. They must put a premium on safety and make safety a way of life.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish you every success in your deliberations. It now gives me great pleasure to declare this seminar open.

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