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ADDRESS BY DR TAY ENG SOON, MINISTER-IN-CHARGE AND  
CHAIRMAN, VOCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINING BOARD,  
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF COMMERCE  
ON MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 1983 AT 7.00 PM

The opening of a new vocational institute, in normal circumstances, would not call for much fanfare nor publicity. A simple function to announce its arrival would have been sufficient.

The official opening of the National Institute of Commerce (NIC) this evening, however, is not just an addition of a new institute. It marks a significant development for the Vocational and industrial training Board (VITB) and a new phase of commercial training for school-leavers, especially girls, in Singapore. A national system of certification and training for the commercial sector has been added to the now familiar Industrial Technician Certificate (ITC), National Trade Certificate (NTC) and Certificate of Competency (CoC) systems established for the industrial skills.

Commercial education and training had for a long time, been largely undertaken by private commercial schools. Governmental efforts through the former Adult Education Board (AEB) and the commercial stream in secondary schools are more recent. However, with the merge of AEB and the former Industrial Training Board (ITB) in 1979, the need to develop a high quality system of training to meet the manpower needs of the commercial sector was recognised.

With the technical assistance of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a three-tier national system of **certification** and commercial **training** was conceptualized in 1980. Under this system, three levels of training aimed at school leavers with different educational qualifications and defined.

At the lowest level or Level 3, is a **basic** fulltime one-year Preliminary Certificate in Business Studies (PCBS) **course** which prepares trainees for employment in **clerical** and related occupations at the operational level. The emphasis is on Business English, Commercial Mathematics, Book-keeping and **Typewriting**. This course is currently **open** to those who **have** completed secondary three but is targeted for **those** with the Certificate of **Secondary** Education (CSE) in the **future**;

**Level 2**, the next higher level, is aimed at **GCE 'O'** level holders for employment at junior executive **and** supervisory level. The two courses, each of two **years** duration **now** offered at this level are the Certificate in Business Studies (CBS) in Secretarial **Practice** and in Accounting. **These** courses share a number of core **subjects** but the secretarial students specialize in stenography and **office** organization whereas those in accounting specialize in accounting, **auditing** and costing.

At Level 1, the highest level, are diploma courses for those who seek employment at the sub-professional level. The Diploma in Business Studies **courses** are presently offered by the Ngee Ann Polytechnic, **Only** the PCSS and C3S courses, which are occupation-oriented, are conducted at the National Institute of Commerce.

Renovated and equipped at a cost of \$7 million, the NIC is the first of two commercial institutes which will be developed by the Board. The second **institute** is currently being built at Clementi New **Town** and is scheduled **for** operation in 1985. NIC is a purpose-planned institute with the latest in training facilities such as electronic typewriters and a mini-computer with capabilities for word processing, accounting and basic programming. Special laboratories are also provided for teaching office practice, audio-typing and for language learning, NIC's physical location in the heart of the Central Business District is **itself** an **asset** for the many business and financial houses in **nearby** Shenton way cannot hut provide an id-al **orientation** to the world of business.

The first **groups** of PCBS and CBS (Accounting) Students have **graduated** from NIC in 1981 and 1982 respectively. The first batch of the CBS (**Secretarial** Practice) course will graduate in March this year. Much effort by VITB staff and external consultants has already gone into the development of the courses at NIC, However, as **a new** institution, the NIG faces a challenging task to establish the identity of its certificates with employers. The status to be accorded to the PCBS and CBS qualifications **can** only be earned through the quality of programmes offered by NIC and performance of its graduates in industry We therefore welcome the participation and support of employers and the public in **our** training efforts. An **important objective** for NIC to **work** towards is offering the PCBS and CBS courses as part-time evening courses for those who are already working thus providing a channel for them to **upgrade** themselves.

The **opening** of NIC has added a significant avenue of skills training for female school leavers. Up to now the Board's predominantly technical and trade courses have appealed more to **the** boys, In contrast, about 80 per **cent** of the **trainees** in **business** studies courses are girls as may

be expected since occupations in the **commerce** and financial sectors provide significant employment opportunities for the **female labour** force. According to the **1980 Census of Population**, clerical, sales and related-occupations accounted for 28 per cent of the total **labour** force. About half of **those** in these occupations were females who also accounted for **40** per cent of the female **labour** force. NIC has a "raining **capacity** of 2,000 **places**. **With** the completion of the **second** commercial institute at Clementi New Town further **opportunities** would be **available** for those who wish to **pursue** a career in the **commercial** field.

On **behalf** of the Board and myself, I wish to thank all **those** who have assisted us over the last **three** years in the development and implementation of a new system of commercial training and **certification**. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the valuable **assistance** of the external consultants and members of **VITB's Commercial** Training Advisory Committee. To the staff of VITB and **NIC**, my congratulations for **their** success in bringing forth a new institution.

On this note, it gives me great pleasure in declaring open the National **Institute** of Commerce.

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