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SPEECH BY DR WAN SOON BEE, MINISTER OF STATE
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION
OF QC CIRCLES AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE AUDITORIUM
ON MONDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 9.00 AM

It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to participate in the 2nd International Exposition of QC Circles (IEQCC) 1985. May I also welcome our guests and participants from Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Fiji and of course Singapore.

I recall that when I opened the National Convention in November 1983, it was a 1-day event held on a Saturday. Eight local circles made their presentation in this Auditorium. At this Convention, 20 circles from eight countries will be making their presentations. In addition, separate forums will be held for managers, facilitators and leaders to discuss issues that concern them. Participants will also have six practical workshops to choose from. This expansion in scope of the QCC Convention runs parallel to the steady increase in participation in the QCC Movement.

I understand that to-date, over 25,000 workers in Singapore are directly involved in QCC's. This represents slightly over two per cent of our workforce of 1.2 million. It is interesting to note that four in 10 QCC members belonged to the union, that is as many as 10,000 union members out of the total union membership of 200,000 are QCC members. But only 15,000 of the non-unionised workforce of about one million were QCC members. Thus a mathematical

calculation will show that as a proportion of the workforce and total union membership, three times as many union members are QCC members compared to non-union members. This reflects the commitment that the union has given to productivity in their organisations. As more workers become involved in QCC's, management must look into how to make QCC's part of their daily operations, and guide QCC's into solving problems which are of priority concern. This in essence is what is meant by Management Productivity - that is managers must manage their resources efficiently.

QCC's rely heavily on management commitment, assistance and support. I am pleased to note that this year, a Manager's Forum has been introduced. QCC's are not successful by chance. They require careful planning and nurturing of new circles and expansion at a managed pace, with management organising training sessions for those who are to be involved.

I am appalled by the fact that 43 per cent of circle members are not trained. In other words, two out of five circle members did not receive training before they joined QCC's. This is indeed a very serious matter as untrained members will not be able to sustain their interest in QCC's for a very long time. They will soon run out of ideas because they do not have the skills to generate more ideas. They may even withdraw from the active participation when they find they do not have the knowledge to contribute effectively to circle discussions.

The National Productivity Board has decided to do something about this. It has with the aid of the Japan Productivity Centre developed a 15-hr QCC course for members to be trained in the basics of QC Circle activities. The course is also conducted in Mandarin. Some companies have made use of this avenue for training their workers. More need to do so.

The fact that circle members are untrained could also be due in part to the lack of support given by middle managers. Sixty per cent of QCC members felt that middle managers did not support QCC's. This has important ramifications. If the manager is not involved then a QCC programme is likely to be less well organised and QCC's are left to grow like weeds, when and how they like. QCC's however must be nurtured like a fruit tree, if they are to contribute to organisation effectiveness.

Managers must not hand QCC's out on a limb. They must integrate it into an overall Company Productivity Plan and especially so when participation rate exceeds about 20 per cent of the workforce. With this critical mass of workers involved in solving productivity and quality problems, management should link up the QCC's into a network for introducing Total Quality Control to involve everyone, including managers in QCC's. Managers should not consider QCC's as relevant only for workers on the production floor. In fact, in the 1985 QC Circle Survey, 43 per cent of QCC members were in the professional and technical occupations.

Many of our managers are professionally competent but they are less well versed in teamwork skills. Perhaps this is why in the 1985 Times Survey, an equal percentage (26 per cent) of respondents placed teamwork on par with money as the chief means to encourage better performance. Managers and supervisors must be trained how to marshal their manpower resources to make practical contributions to improving productivity at the workplace.

I am pleased to note that many of the circle project themes at this year's QCC Conventions were related to cost and wastage reduction and time savings. These are projects which can make a significant economic impact on the profitability of the organisation. In fact 53 QCC's have reported a total savings of S\$1 million for their organisations in 1985.

Aside from the monetary savings, QCC's have generated a better cooperative spirit at the workplace, both among workers and between managers and supervisors and workers. This cooperative spirit will help all within the organisation to do their utmost to steer their organisation through the difficult patch they are experiencing now. They will be better poised to take advantage of the upturn in the economy.

On this note, it gives me great pleasure to declare the 2nd International Exposition of QC Circles open.

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