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SPEECH BY MR EUGENE YAP, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (LABOUR) AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SINGAPORE QUALITY RELIABILITY ASSOCIATION, AT THE OPENING OF QC CIRCLE FACILITATORS' TRAINING COURSE AT THE FRENCH ROOM, HOTEL EQUATORIAL, ON MONDAY, AUG. 24, 1981, AT 9 A.M.

I am very pleased to be here to witness the starting of yet another QC Circle Facilitators' Training Course. I remember the first one that was introduced in 1980 when Mr Dewar was here to conduct the course. The response at that time was very good, the course was very enthusiastically received. Now I hear that this course is also receiving a similarly enthusiastic response, so much so that we had to turn away some would-be participants. This kind of response speaks well of Singaporeans. The Singaporean worker is showing up as one with a strong willingness to learn and appreciative of the need to upgrade his skill. This is indeed a praiseworthy quality because as the population gets better educated, our economic performance should be further improved as there is generally a relationship between performance level and the growth in education. An educated workforce learns new tasks easily and adopts technology for changing markets more quickly. You are responding very positively to the government's call to raise the overall quality of our manufactured goods and services. If this kind of attitude continues to be encouraged and can find a proper channel for its development, Singapore can be assured of a relatively bright future. We must seize every opportunity we can to perfect our manpower and then we can be more confident of surmounting any rough patches in our economic future.

Today, we are glad to welcome an old friend, Mr Dewar to conduct our course. He is not alone this time and we are especially glad to have Mr Welton Howell as instructor for the second class. Because of the overwhelming response, we have to run two classes. Mr Howell has extensive experience in QC Circles in the United States Air Force and his expertise is highly relevant to participants in the second class, as more than 14 of them are from non-manufacturing organizations such as HDB, PSA, NTUC, SIA, RSAF and the Polytechnic. It is very encouraging for us to note that many government departments are also joining in to push the concept of QC Circles in their own operations.

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With this course, SQRA would have trained 60 facilitators. NFB has trained about 75. There should therefore be a total of 135 facilitators fully trained and spread out all over our various industries in Singapore to provide an effective multiplier effect on increasing the population of QC Circle Facilitators in Singapore.

SQRA will continue to ceaselessly promote QC Circles in Singapore. We must succeed. To make the path smoother for Singaporeans, we will soon be making available our own training manuals on how to organise and run QC Circles in industries in both English and Mandarin. Among the many activities that SQRA and SISIR will also be organizing in future to promote the concept of QC Circles and to spur Singaporeans on to work as a team, two are worth mentioning:

- (i) SQRA and SISIR will be host to a team of QC Circle experts from Japan in January 1982. These people would be here to exchange ideas on QC Circles with representatives from Singapore industries.
- (ii) SQRA and SISIR will jointly lead a team of Quality Control Managers to Japan to attend the Second International QC Circle Convention from September 30 to October 2, 1981. NFB is also represented in this team to Japan. This will be SQRA and SISIR's second organized mission to Japan to study QC Circles but, of course, this time, members of the team will have an opportunity to attend the much-talked about QC Circle Convention, besides visiting well-known Japanese industries to observe such circles in operation.

I am particularly glad to note also that this will be the first time that two of Singapore's industries, namely Mitsuboshi Belting Pte (S'pore) and Hewlett Packard Pte (S'pore) will be presenting papers at this convention. Mitsuboshi will present a paper on "How to Reduce Scrap Rate in Building Process" and Hewlett Packard will be presenting a paper on "Our Experience in QC Circle Activities".

It is my hope that more Singapore industries will be able to reach such high standards in QC Circle activities as to be able to present papers at such international conferences.

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- (iii) SCRA and SISIR will jointly organize Singapore's first QC Circle Convention in mid-1982. Companies with established QC Circles are advised to start preparing for the convention.

In our endeavours to train and develop manpower, let us not lose sight of the individual. I believe returns on the individual must feature prominently in any company's organizational plans. A good management should be able to motivate workers effectively to bring about maximum productivity and, at the same time, ensure minimum wastage of resources, time and effort. I think that Japanese companies like Mitsubishi and Hitachi and American companies like IBM, Xerox and Hewlett Packard will agree with me on this point. To them, people are their most important assets and they believe that, if they can develop people to their utmost, then there will be very little problem achieving loyalty and maximum contribution from them.

At this point, I should like to stress that the human factor is vastly significant to our economic health and, as such, should never take second place to returns on investments. In our present time, we must not expect to see a working environment in which the boss solely directs future plans without consulting those who play an active role in product design, engineering and production. The QC Circle is an excellent vehicle for the development of the individual and, in fact, a perfect channel for management to show its commitment to returns on individuals, and if this is properly run, and the system works, you can be sure that the output will be very high. The QC Circle is one method which allows for the development of loyalty ie small cohesive group of people coming together, using known tools to identify problems and being given the opportunity to discuss and contribute towards their solution. In this way, members of QC Circles can perfect themselves and, at the same time, perfect their work. The process of joint consultation between workers and management in Singapore must be developed further in order that we can improve the quality of products produced and simultaneously increase productivity. There will, of course, be some old-fashioned firms or bosses whose management has a shortsighted view of things and seems overly concerned about how to make a quick buck or to be too ready to pass negative comments on the application of new concepts such as QC Circles in Singapore. It would be good for these people to check their facts first before passing remarks. We have

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to eradicate negative thinking of this sort and be prepared to try out new ideas together in order to succeed better in future.

We have to completely revamp the system. Under an efficient management, certain characteristics should show up. For example, the moment the worker comes to work, he works because he feels the company belongs to him and not because he is told to work. The worker should be able to see in his work environment the fulfilment of his needs. In fact, the management and the workers should be able to identify themselves with the company and be fully aware that when the company forges ahead, both benefit. If the worker feels he belongs to the company, he would not want to do anything to destroy it.

The most important thing in achieving quality and productivity is to gain the trust and loyalty of the workers who work for you. But if management think only of what they can get out of workers and not what they can do to increase the workers' welfare and training, then it would not be surprising to find that the people involved in production and service think very little of the management and the company, and quality and productivity will suffer. No amount of QC Circles in this case will solve your problems. You probably will not be able to have successful QC Circles organized in such an environment. The stage must be set right first. This is in accordance with the principle of "doing things right the first time". There must be a genuine change of heart on the part of employers and employees to want to make their company the pride of their lives.

Whatever a company or boss puts into a worker by way of better welfare and training, there is bound to be a good return in loyalty and productivity. Here I am reminded of an example of an executive I once met. Fresh from the university, he joins a company with the burning ambition to become its manager overnight. The idea of a good housing loan, a company car with a driver and many other fringe benefits was to him an incentive to work hard. Yet the same person would condemn the workers who look forward to better benefits from the company. They apparently expect the worker to work simply for the glory of the company! It is well worth noting that such double standards thinking cannot apply anymore if our industries are to survive in a very competitive world market in the future.

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We must accept the fact that when work is done well, everyone should benefit. Management should not be shortsighted by grabbing the lion share of company benefits and leave only the crumbs to the workers. Everyone will benefit when there is satisfaction and harmony on the part of workers. Do not underestimate the capability of our workers because, properly motivated, they and the management can work together as a team to produce surprising results.

I have now great pleasure in declaring this QC Circle Facilitators' Training Course open.
