

Quality and Society

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To improve our standard of living, we all agree that we need greater and greater productivity. Quality is the most essential ingredient in productivity. Through proper applications of the science of quality assurance, industries could produce better products at reduced cost and thereby broaden the market share and finally get more profit.

The cost of living is a much discussed topic today and everybody is concerned as the living index continues to rise. Quality control, aiming to produce better products at reduced cost, would necessarily help to make the cost of living a more manageable problem.

Sri Lanka does not need maximum quality products at very high prices. Instead, she needs optimum quality products at reasonable cost. What is needed is a product or service which meets the needs of the user at the minimum possible cost.

Today, the average consumer expects quantity with quality and that too economically, and this is a challenge modern industrial management has to face. Quality control can certainly help to meet this challenge

successfully. Quality assurance is no longer an aid to management, it is now an imperative need for further productivity and profitability of commercial enterprises and indeed for the survival of nations. Today, we need management that lives and breathes quality, management that honours and respects quality. Quality thinking must emanate from the top if it is to permeate the whole organisation. If quality control is to make a significant contribution, management by direct and indirect means should encourage quality activities and provide the necessary climate for proper growth of quality as a vital function.

Quality control is a confidence necessary to ensure that a product or service meets the consumer satisfaction. The success of any manufacturer depends upon the establishment and daily renewal of consumer confidence. It is possible to fail in business even if the relative quality of the products is good. However it is not possible to continue in business if the product quality is poor unless one has a monopoly. At a time when the accent is on export promotion and

the establishment of our products in competitive world markets, the part that quality control has to play need not be over-emphasised.

As you will agree, Sri Lanka is currently undergoing what could be termed an industrial revolution and in this context, quality control is a revolutionary philosophy practiced by management. As we become more and more developed, there is a greater and greater need for quality. Hence it must be promoted by everybody right from top management to factory floor level. Consideration of quality is growing daily and the consumer is becoming more quality-conscious and is always seeking the best return for money. But how often does the consumer get the desired quality for the price he pays?

In spite of certain legislative measures, cheating the consumer is a large-scale daily occurrence. Adulteration of food products like milk, jaggery, chilly powder, coffee, just to mention a few, is at an unlimited scale and the consumer often gets half the quality he pays for more than half the time. Quite apart from getting appreciably less value for money, such adulteration could cause health problems as the daily health and safety of the common man depends upon the quality of manufactured products. One obvious reason for such cheating is scarcity. Therefore, the authorities must give priority to increased production of essential commodities followed by efficient distribution. Lack of properly organised consumer resistance is one of the main reasons why inferior products continue to thrive in the market. This country needs more efficient consumer organisations whose objective should be to:

- (1) Educate consumers,
- (2) Ensure that the consumer gets reasonable quality at reasonable price,

- (3) Communicate with industry about the wishes and needs of consumers.

The consumer could play an important role in the national promotion of quality control.

Hardly a day passes without consumer criticism of the quality of products available for sale. Razor blades, boxes of matches, soaps, are just a few examples. This is particularly so with regard to price control items. Price control of essential commodities is commendable. But price control alone without proper control of the quality has no value or does not achieve its objective. Price control is not the only answer to bring down the price or to stabilise the prices of essential commodities. To give the consumers a product at a reasonable price the authorities should take meaningful steps to improve productivity and also see that the manufacturer gets a reasonable profit without which no enterprise can continue.

One of the most important things that all of us can do is to inspire people by creating an environment where the concept of quality is respected and honoured. In the final analysis, quality is the product of a framework of mind. It is therefore rooted in human attitudes.

No one person cultivates his own food, weaves his own clothes or builds his own residence. All of us depend on other people for many things. We live in mutual support and for this reason we all have a stake in the quality of everyone else's effort. The very continuity of our daily lives is built around the continuity of numerous vital services: food, water, power, transport, communication, waste removal and many others. Therefore we can only paint a pleasant picture of the good life provided the dykes of quality hold fast. Therefore our continuity requires quality.

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THE PRODUCTION OF QUALITY INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS

Practical problems in the production of quality industrial products are now being studied by the Bureau of Ceylon Standards. The Bureau has so far helped two corporations—the Ceramics Corporation (in the production of mosaic tiles) and the Textile Corporations to solve such problems.

These problems were brought up at the Bureau's training class in standard and quality control for managers and technicians in industries.

The Bureau has so far trained 200 persons at managerial and technical level in both public and private sector industries, in industrial and quality control.