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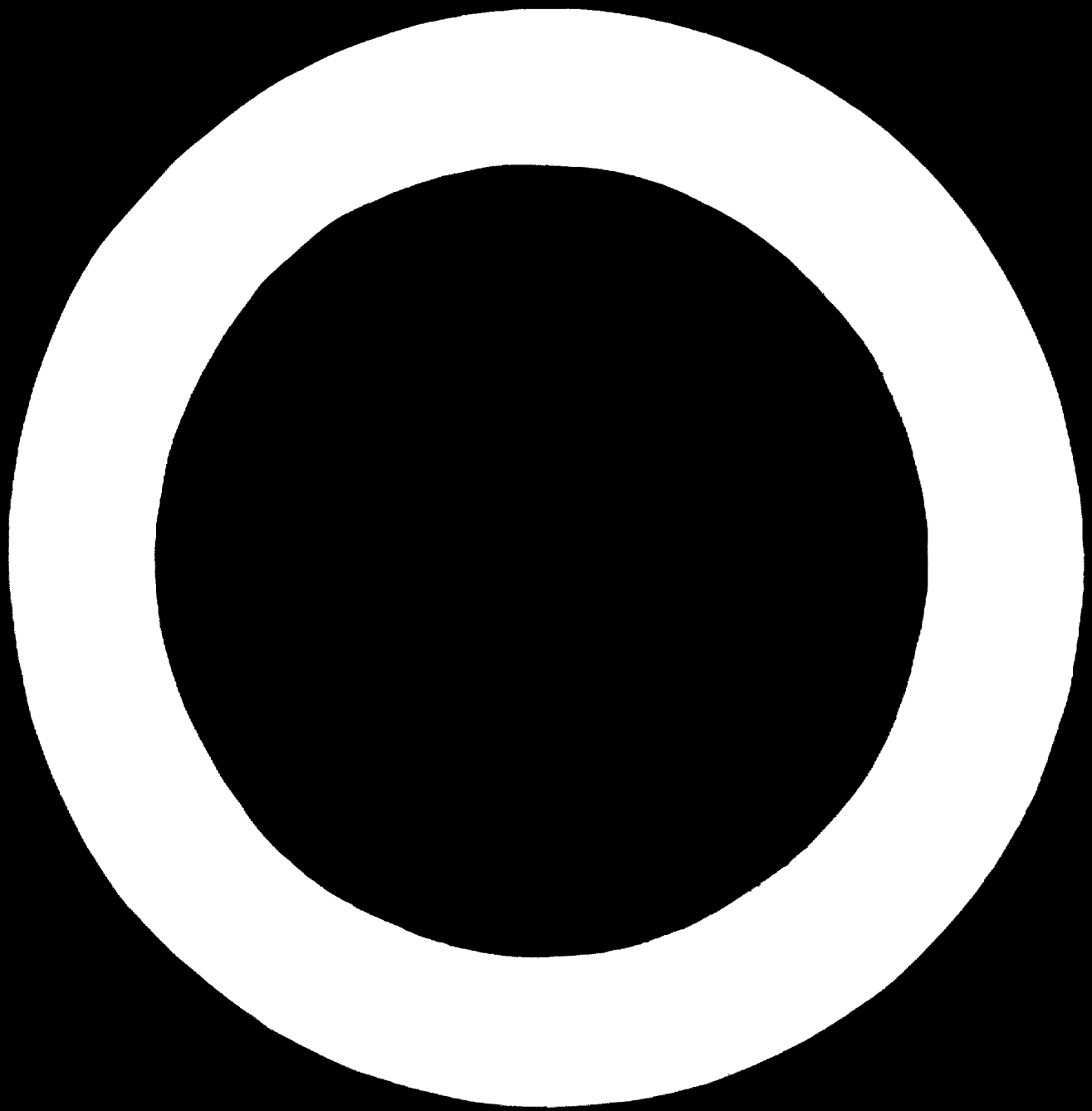
MASS MEDIA INFORMATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS
AND QUALITY CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS^{1/}

R. Hopper *

* UNIDO Expert, Thai Industrial Standard Institute

^{1/}The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Secretariat of UNIDO. This document has been reproduced without formal editing.

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It would be as well at the outset to put the public relations and information effort into perspective. Just where does it stand in the difficult task of attracting support for standardization and certification in a laissez-faire economy?

The answer is that it stands nowhere in its own right -- just as the preparation of standards and the organization of a certification scheme are meaningless without adoption of this work.

But it is an essential factor in a tripartite approach consisting of the involvement of industry in the process of standardization and certification; collaboration and support of Government; and the informative and persuasive role of a professional information service. It is absolutely essential that all three are keyed together by central policy and by real integration of effort.

This raises quite an important issue in the standards world. In far too many corners of the world 'public relations' is regarded as something of a luxury to be tacked on to the main activities of standards and certification if the money is available. Technical information is respectable; public relations - all the devices of persuading people to accept standardization - is, to this day, sometimes a hard thing for the qualified physicist or engineer to accept as part of his own orbit in standardization. Fortunately this attitude is changing and standards engineers and quality control specialists are recognizing they need a voice - and that this voice does not necessarily speak in their own terminologies. The voice has to interpret what they do and their motives for doing it in a number of different accents according to the audience.

It is necessary for a successful campaign to define objectives: persuasive activities will flounder if the limited financial and staff resources are not canalised into paths leading to defined objectives. In broad outline these are generally:

1. The producing industries

2. Government - particularly Cabinet Ministers and senior Ministry officials. A standards institute needs the utmost support in legislature, the allocation of funds and backing in international representation.
3. Consumers, Industrial and public
4. Universities and Technical Colleges

Often overlooked, these are sources of growing adoption of standards in the future. Within a short time, graduates and skilled operators will be entering industry and Government. Already informed on the benefits of standardization and certification, they could form cadres of expanding awareness of standards in a company.

PRIORITIES

Each country must decide its own priorities, of course. A pattern for new standards organization in a developing country could well be to concentrate, say, the first two years on industry, commerce and Government, playing a low key on the general public. Succeeding years could then mount campaigns directed at the public and universities and colleges. The reason for a low profile on approach to the general public is that it can be counter-productive. It is a maxim of all effective publicity that is not the slightest use promoting anything if action cannot be taken as a result of interest being aroused by that promotion. Consumers are only irritated by the promise of a national certification scheme offering protection if they cannot then go out and find that quality mark on products.

This does not mean that the business sections of national newspapers should not be used to provide a two-way influence on businessmen and Government officials. Such men become members of the general public every day. They read newspapers and watch television. Quite often a single, short article in a newspaper or a two-minute coverage on television achieves much more than a 10-page report. Every busy Minister and businessman has too much to read these days.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

With priorities established, what are the means of communication? They are tried and familiar of course, but worth listing and examining for effect. They are:

- (a) TV, radio, newspapers, popular and technical journals.
- (b) Publications.
- (c) Conferences, seminars, lectures.
- (d) Visual Aids, including films.
- (e) Ad hoc schemes and campaigns.
- (f) Visits to industry.
- (g) Technical information service.

METHODS

Volumes have been written about the methods of using these means of communication and I will content myself with emphasizing the essential factors in using these tools.

Television

This is a strictly visual medium. No approach to a television producer will be successful if the subject is based upon paperwork or talking. It is preferable to outline script suggestions which include many visual elements - test machines, production lines, etc. - particularly operations which are spectacular.

Each country has to know the requirements of its own TV services. In some countries, editors would consider it an insult for a complete script to be presented to them but welcome outlines on which they can work with their own ideas. Others are grateful for a full script on a subject about which they know little.

The rules for television proposals are little speech, much action.

Radio

This medium is more inclined to use scripts but the language must be simple and spoken, as opposed to literary, in content.

Newspapers and journals

The utmost affect can only be achieved by a close study of the media. A short Press release on a subject can be written for all media, but feature material - articles and the like - must be written and presented to suit the editorial policy of the publication. No busy editorial desk can be expected to re-write your material to suit its readers. Read the publication, study its style and present accordingly. Know also the press dates of each publication. You will not be

appreciated if you present material for a bi-monthly technical publication, for example, the day after an edition went to press.

A filing system and classification system for all publications in your country and those overseas of value to you should be kept. Press material can then simply be labelled 'A' 'B' 'C' etc. for the despatch clerks.

Occasionally, in turn, offer newspapers an exclusive on a particular event taking care to achieve a fair balance between all. This builds up good feeling in the Press and occasionally ensures larger coverage than you would otherwise get.

Get to know the Press. Membership of the Press Clubs by the standards information officer is almost essential.

Publications

Many standards bodies have been guilty of assuming that, since standards and certification is a serious business, they can only be reflected by grey and lifeless publications, devoid of humour, wearisome to the eye and not immediately acceptable to the mind. The reasoning presumably is that the dignity of a national body is maintained and engineers and industrial standards readers would be highly suspicious of information imparted in anything other than an 'official' looking document.

The truth of the matter is that such attitudes to published material only give the impression of an old fashioned organization, fearful of change and unimaginative. Conversely, good design and good typography will always heighten the senses, no matter how technical the content. It is a pleasure to see some standards bodies realising this and revitalising even their standards covers and interior lay-outs. Standards bodies should aim at producing four types of publications as soon as possible. There are:

Official Documents

Laws and regulations, standards certification procedures.

Guiding Publications

Booklets and leaflets which explain complex standards, simplify laws and otherwise try to clarify official documents for the man who has to refer to them. Mil Standard

105, the complex British Standard 9000 series dealing with the quality assessment of electronic components and the ISO standard on SI units are among many examples which need ancillary guiding publications.

Information and Publicity Material

These form the persuasive element of an information service and include varieties of publicity material aimed at schools, general public, universities, consumer groups and sectors of industry. They should fundamentally include simple leaflets on standardization and certification, lists of standards, certification licenses issued and names of manufacturers, with products.

All this I am sure you are well acquainted with. Other publications can be issued as money and time permit, but I would suggest one piece of literature among these which most standards bodies overlook - a publication showing companies how to use the Mark to its best advantage in advertizing and point of sale material. Most design artists want to tuck this mark away at the bottom of the page, but there are many ingenious ways that it can be used in the main body of the advertisement or publicity.

Conferences, Seminars, Lectures

One hardly needs to dwell upon this aspect of an information and persuasive approach except to say that one's mind should not be concerned only with those seminars and conferences which can be arranged by the standards body. There are many of these events run by other Government departments and industrial organizations who will allow participation - once they are aware of the involvement of standards and certification with their own activities.

It is always a good idea for Directors of standards bodies to appraise and nominate those people who are good speakers as a form of panel from which can be drawn speakers. Nevertheless, a national standards body often cannot supply all the speakers it requires and it is often rewarding to make up lecture sits for schoolteachers and members of technical committees.

Visual Aids and Films

It is an adage of newspaper men that one good picture is worth 10000 words - and this rule could well apply in many of the activities of a standards information service. A conflict often exists between on technical staff of a standards body and its information officer on exhibitions and displays. Understandably, technical members want to explain and elaborate, holding that it is superficial to tell only part of the story. This may be so but it goes against the grain of human nature. Whatever the professional qualifications or consumer interest, people will not stand and read long texts on exhibitions. The aim should be bold attraction, enough words and pictures to whet appetite - and accompanying literature to supply the detailed information.

Ad Hoc Schemes and Campaigns

The presentation of licenses to companies by a Minister or well-known figure - an annual national essay competition in schools and universities on the benefits of a certification scheme - support for national newspaper special supplements - special displays of certified goods in department stores - balloons and sweat shirts with the mark at public fairs - discreet ties with the mark as a motif forming a kind of club for all those associated with certification - these are among many supporting schemes which can be arranged.

Fulllest advantage should be taken of the ad hoc opportunity. If someone writes to a newspaper about quality control or standards, invite that person to the Institute or test house - and invite the newspaper photographer to accompany the letter writer. Considerable popular publicity can be gained this way.

One aspect of supporting activities almost invariably arouses controversy in certification work. This is the question of how far a standards body should involve itself in company publicity following the award of the Mark. Many institutes are so sensitive to the possibility of charges of selective support that they shun any association whatsoever.

Such an attitude is not conducive to the adoption of certification, nor is it fair to those who take the trouble to go through certification procedures. Advice on the most effective use of the mark in

publicity, supporting statements about the importance of the mark, the use of photographs taken in the licensee's factory to illustrate the Institute's own publicity - these are all acceptable providing there is no publicity claim for the product.

One of the most influential policies that a national standards body can adopt is to be seen to be publicly supporting the companies using its mark to the best of its ability within the known limitations.

Visits to Industry

To stress this would be perhaps to labour the obvious; nevertheless it should be worth stating that a meeting with boards of directors with a 10-minute synchronized sound slide programme with following discussions are sometimes worth reams of correspondence or press features.

This is also the case in mounting a mobile display in a situation in a factory where employees of all ranks can see it. The more standards and certification becomes a talking point at all levels of education, the more readiness there will be to accept them.

Technical Information Service

Little needs to be said to a professional audience about this, except to emphasize that if this is a publicly announced service it must have three attributes. It must have speed (answers delivered as rapidly as possible), accuracy and patience (patience to sift through ambiguous queries, garbled intelligence, etc.)

Untold damage is done by a slack and unresponsive 'technical service'.

THE MEANS

So much for the machinery of mass media communications. Its use, the means of employing it, are, of course, of paramount consideration.

A fundamental premise which must be accepted from the beginning is that standards and certification are strange bed fellows with the mass media. Founded on facts and formulae, built on legal precision, fearful of glib statements, the organization behind the two has to rely to a large extent on media which deals with the immediate, synthesizes its meaning in headlines and terse paragraphs or momentary pictures, and which seeks to excite without profound understanding. How then, are the two to be made compatible?

Since it is quite impossible to alter the nature of the modern mass media, it is obvious that the standards organizations must overcome a natural reluctance to forego a formalised way of life and fit the mass media. It must not be afraid to publicise itself, using the techniques of these media.

A corollary to this is that directors of standards bodies must have the courage to trust the judgement of a professional information officer, checking only for facts and not for the manner in which these facts have been presented.

Many standards bodies have had a hard struggle to win the Press to their side, simply because the executive of the organization insists on issuing Press information in the way he would prepare a professional paper.

A sound guiding philosophy in all this work is that mass communications must be honest and they must exude confidence. If a car safety belt snaps in an accident, admit that it could happen in an assurance scheme; if a can of certified pineapple raises complaints against the mark, admit the gaps - but bring the dissatisfied consumer in to explain the system. This nearly always turns a complainer into a supporter. If you have issued wrong information to the Press, admit it and set it right. If a child is burned in certified low-flammability clothing, admit it - but then announce exhaustive investigation into the batch. People understand mistakes and will back you up because they make mistakes themselves. But they dislike official evasion and are prepared to condemn the whole organization on one example.

This does not gainsay that the tone of all communications from the Institute should be optimistic, subtly implying success whatever difficulties are being experienced. Manufacturers are not prepared to align themselves with a struggling possibility and consumers have no confidence in a certification system which is known publicly to have many teething troubles. Nothing succeeds like success.

An outstanding example of this lies in the British change to the metric system. This complex and costly change in industry was entirely voluntary. Yet inherent in all publicity from the British Standards Institution - which bore the brunt in the early years - and from Government was the conviction of the inevitability of the changeover. There were arguments and counter-arguments against SI units, timing and methods of implementing the change to metric, but very few lone voices which objected to metric.

Yet, had any major sectors of industry resisted the change, the British plans for conversion could have collapsed.

A large part of this acceptance must be due to the early flood of information which, whilst it would examine every proposal countered by industry, never at any time contained a hint that there was any other alternative for British industry but to go metric. It is this sort of confident optimism which must colour all information concerning certification.

There is another consequence of this attitude which is often overlooked: the effect of such publicity within the certifying body. Technical staff, especially new young certifying teams, must, in the midst of the headaches, frustrations and anxieties, sometimes wonder whether it is all worth while. Public recognition in the form of successful publicity undoubtedly has its effect on morale. And it is so often the case that people have a habit of altering their ways to live up to the publicity they read about themselves!

Persuasive efforts directed towards the two factions which embody a national certification scheme - the producer and the consumer - require almost directly opposite approaches. A manufacturer doesn't want it and has to be persuaded that it is in his interests. A consumer wants it but has still to be persuaded to use it.

The approach to manufacturers found in practice to be most successful in a number of countries has the following ingredients:

1. The quality mark gives more confidence to potential customers at home and abroad.
2. It often allows a company - particularly in the developing countries - to compete successfully with imported quality goods.
3. It gives a manufacturer a plus in that he can offer a bulk buyer of his products reduced goods inwards inspection.
4. He has a pretty authoritative backing in any dispute over quality.
5. The certification teams are ready-made consultancies at no cost which can often help companies technically.

There is, of course, no word in this of national aspirations, the effect of rising quality levels on the national economy and all the motivation which impels standards bodies to set up certification schemes. Without belittling the national pride of some manufacturers, it is quite certain that such appeals are valueless as a broad platform.

Publicity directed towards the consumer of average intelligence can be fairly well defined as educational and persuasive; educational in the sense that the public must be fully aware of the implications behind the mark, persuasive in the form of convincing the consumer to buy to the mark and not opt for something which may cost a little less initially.

This is the biggest single obstacle to a rapid growth of certification. If consumers - industrial and general public - could be persuaded to buy only those products which bore the national certification mark, the national standards bodies would be hard put to it to come with applications.

Quality consciousness - implying also safety protection - offers no problems because it is to a large extent bred into us as consumers. We all like to get the best for as little money as possible. The problem arises in what is 'the best'. And it is at this point that an educational programme begins - and the sensitivity of approach. Whilst support for consumer groups and the spread of information through these groups can be achieved at sophisticated levels in which the correlation of standards and quality assurance, technical definitions of 'quality' and legal involvements, can be explained and understood, to attempt to convey this message to the lay public invites confusion rather than understanding.

It should be recognised at the start that simple messages, simply conveyed will have their effect through the mass media. If news desks staffs themselves cannot fully grasp the relationship between a standard specification and certification to that standard, they are hardly likely to be able to convey the facts to their readers.

Standards Institutes should not be upset by the inevitable use of 'guarantee' when 'assurance' is the right word and they should not complain to editors when a confused story appears which shows little understanding of the procedures behind certification and quality control. It is sufficient that the lay public grasp that the Mark offers security in purchasing and that the manufacturer is under independent surveillance. In English the words 'audit', 'quality assurance', 'sampling analysis', etc. are not understood by the general public and should be avoided.

Other stages are of course to educate the public into a simple fact of life that it is not always the cheapest product which is good value for money in the long run.

Certifying bodies must inevitably involve themselves with reputable consumer organizations in order to use the excellent channels of these groups to disseminate information. Nevertheless, this also places an obligation on them to support manufacturers holding the Mark in order to balance the picture. Consumers must be made aware of their obligations in using a product correctly and in the fact that the same mass production techniques which give them acceptable quality at reasonable prices will also throw up the odd failure, no matter how stringent the quality control. The promotional invincibility of 'Zero Defect' is open to the highest suspicion.

Apart from the consumer groups, an obvious outlet for consumer-directed publicity are the newspaper columnists. It is worth many hours spent in visiting and explaining to these journalists on newspapers and popular journals - the resultant support can be significant.

Often overlooked is the part that the manufacturer has to play in educating his own public. So often one sees the mark displayed in advertising and promotional literature with a proud claim to a license when the reader can have no possible measure of its importance. Initially such publicity must contain at least a hint of what the license involves to be effective. This applies as much to industrial as to consumer goods.

The importance of licensees certifying bodies advising licensees on this cannot be overstated.

Very much more can be achieved by complete harmony between the standards technical executive and its information service. When a new standard is published, a delay of a few days in announcing this could achieve much more coverage than by rushing out a press release the same day. The placing of an article in an influential newspaper or magazine just before the Minister or Cabinet is to make a decision affecting standards or certification often has favourable results. The award of a license to a manufacturer makes a small stir in the business sections of the Press whereas a ceremony at which 20 licenses are awarded by a prominent figure sometimes produces headlines. A statement of rational importance could well be heightened if it is held over for one or two days to coincide with a national event which will draw considerable attention.

The maximum effect calls for maximum coordination of effort. It is essential for information officers themselves to be fully informed.

THAI EXPERIENCE SUMMARIZES

The proposals made in this paper can be summarized to some extent - if not totally - by what is happening in the Thai Industrial Standards Institute.

The role of information services as an integral branch of all operations is secure. In a staff of just over 80, largely consisting of technically qualified staff, one senior officer is in charge of technical information and public relations. He has one full-time journalist working for him and another is on UN fellowship training; there is an artist and draughtsman assistant and a full-time photographer. Plans are being made to strengthen the journalistic side. Major decisions by the Standards Council and in working operations are passed on to this section by the Director.

Although a well-planned programme was put together which canalised resources into established priorities, not all of this was met and, in retrospect, perhaps too much time was spent on developing the Press, radio and television side. Whilst this was perhaps a slight error of judgement, it did produce a situation in which no important newspaper, commercial or technical journal has not carried at least one major feature about TISI activities. In the space of 18 months since the first certification licenses were issued, well over 100 articles and major news stories have been published, six television appearances made and ten broadcasts, including a peak listening broadcast by the Director of 30 minutes.

The priorities established of strong pressure on the industrial, commercial and Governmental circles were adhered to, sometimes to the chagrin of those closely connected with the standardization and certification movement. Some members of the staff complained that nobody knew about the certification effort. Despite this, the priorities were firmly held and there can be little doubt that members of the Cabinet, industrialists and academics are very much more aware of standards and certification than they were a short time ago.

The move into the consumer field started a few months ago and is gaining momentum. It coincided with the issue of the first consumer licenses. At the present time it is still being closely controlled in alignment with the number of goods actually available in the shops which carry the Mark.

In this consumer activity two of the proposals made in this paper have been followed closely: the study of the media and preparation of material accordingly and the guiding principle that even technologists appreciate a brighter touch to

to quite serious information. A glance at the headlines to articles and news stories indicates the way information had been shaped for its audience. Thus 'Higher Profit From a Rational Approach in Industry' in the Economic and Social Journal; 'The Day the World Fell Apart' in a national newspaper; 'A New Badge of Honour - Made in Thailand', again in a national newspaper; 'Standardization - what it means to you as a Consumer' in a high-quality bi-monthly popular journal; 'Go Out and Buy to the Mark' in a national newspaper. The texts in every case have matched the headlines.

As far as television and radio broadcasts are concerned, although using the facilities of the consumer panel of the Women's Council of Thailand, who have television time, all scripts were prepared for them. In each case they swung standards and certification in behind a topical theme such as inflation, oil shortage or pollution.

When the first licenses were issued to industrial companies, care was taken to support these companies as much as possible in their publicity. This has been particularly noticeable in the consumer field now developing. These companies have been advised how to use the Mark prominently and have been given slogans and descriptive texts which explain it. This advice has been taken up by those companies which have entered into large campaigns, with, we believe, good results.

This concentration on the press side of mass media meant that the preparation of exhibition and display material suffered somewhat. Nevertheless, a mobile exhibition has been completed and several displays have been mounted at the popular Red Cross Fair and other events. In line with what has already been said about this medium, texts have been simple, leaving the accompanying literature to give greater detail.

Among those items in the immediate future are a sound/visual slide programme on certification for small influential groups, lecture kits and slides, and a children's quiz for Thailand's most popular family magazine.

What have been the results?

Without a statistically controlled survey it is impossible to quantify of course, but a national newspaper published a letter from an unknown student which talked about TISI and its work and called for more compulsory certification; a provincial purchasing officer called in to buy relevant standards about which he had read; some companies applied for a license as a direct result of hearing or

reading publicity material; the Government issued two important regulations - that purchasing officers should refer to standards when buying and show preference for certified goods and that all government departments were to change to international 'A' paper sizes as far as possible; a third year Business Management student could not only casually recognise the mark, but could name the Institute administering it.

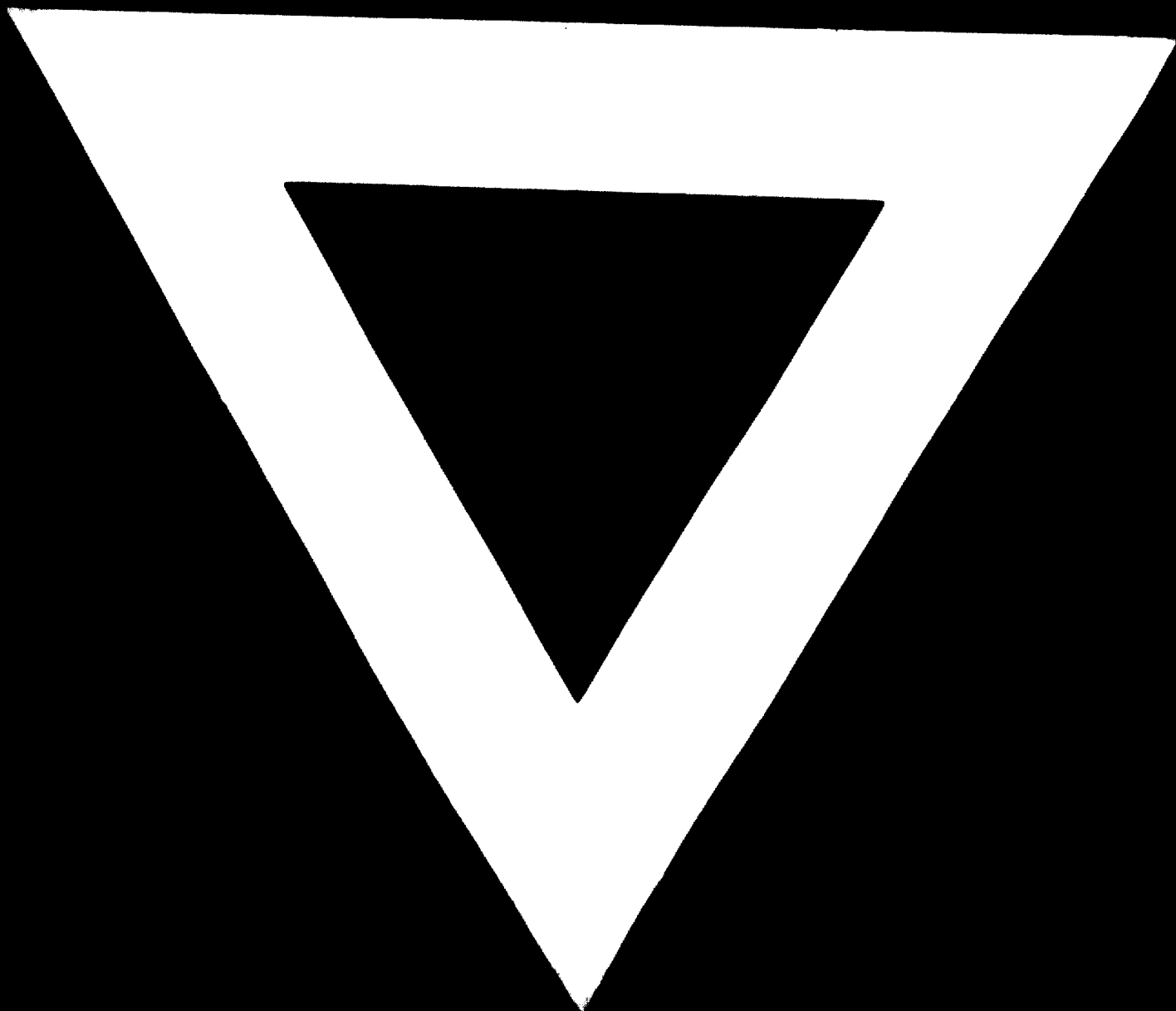
It would be absurd to claim that the use of mass media communications has resulted in the very lively impact which the infant movement has made. The effect of some compulsory certification, the skills of an energetic director and the backing of the Thai Government must make first claim. Conversely it would be a weak case to say that the effect of mass media publicity had no effect on Governmental and industrial opinion and that it was not an essential link in a situation in which TISI can anticipate that, in the space of 2½ years, it will have certified something in the order of 3000 million baht's worth of products.

PROLOGUE

This paper has been concerned largely with mass media information, but it is worth recording the effect of a deliberate public relations exercise to smooth the path of certification in a certain area.

Quite recently in Thailand a Royal Decree was issued which made it compulsory for the quality of tapioca to be certified. This particular trade is noted for its high competitiveness, and its overt suspicious of Government interference. Some trouble in implementing the act was foreseen. However, Mr. Chaiwai Sangruji, the director of TISI, has set out on a programme of visiting the major areas, introducing the visiting certification teams and explaining the Act and its consequences. Short publicity pieces have been issued which stress the assistance TISI wishes to give in raising quality levels of this major export commodity, rather than the imposition of punitive measures. This was followed up by direct assistance in filling-in the application forms. On the initial runs, the attendances and cooperation in supplying of test samples have exceeded expectations.

This softening-up process, this winning cooperation, is an example of direct public relations which no amount of mass media information will surplant. It is a reminder that this form of direct access to specialist groups is a valuable aid in getting across the benefits of quality control and certification and turning resistance into cooperation.



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