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Speech by dr. J.A. van Kemenade, Minister of Education and Sciences, delivered at the opening of the International Vocational Competitions in Utrecht on 4th July 1977.

It is with great pleasure that I comply with the request made by the organizers to open these 23rd International Vocational Competitions.

That these competitions are referred to as the "23rd" implies that in this matter we cannot speak of something new, something that has yet to develop and prove its value, but that these competitions are already an established institution. With such events there is normally the risk that the mere traditional aspects will gain the upper hand. Fortunately, this is not the case here. This is undoubtedly because the stress has not primarily been laid on the competitive element, in the sense of mutual competition and gaining victories, but more on stimulating vocational training.

The aim of vocational training is creating craftsmanship. In connection with this craftsmanship there are a great many problems in various interrelations on national and international levels. I am thinking here for instance of the serious problem of unemployment; of the connection between education and the labour market, of the problem especially mentioned by the industry: the gap that is said to have arisen between scholastic education and actual-practice directed vocational training as a result of the generalization of present pre-occupational formation. Undoubtedly you will be faced with similar difficulties in your own country. In this company I will not tire you with considerations of these problems in the Netherlands.

Today I will mainly deal with craftsmanship itself, from which, surely, the international vocational competition derives its meaning. I will not talk about the consequences that a number of developments in the world of labour and occupation has had on the practice of craftsmanship and, partly as a result thereof, on vocational training and pre-occupational formation.

These are problems that are too often pushed to the background in discussion. Yet they are matters that are now typical in industrialized countries but which, in the near future, will also affect the non-industrialized countries.

First of all I wish to give you an outline of some major developments that have thoroughly changed and are still changing the exercise of trade and the craftsmanship involved, especially the rational approach that characterizes the situation of labour. In this context I am thinking, in particular, of the progressing mechanization, automation and division of labour.

Subsequently I will pay some attention to the effects that this development has on the nature and direction of the exercise of any trade and on the required qualifications of skill. It is clear that these developments have consequences on present and future training courses. Therefore, I will pay some attention to this at the end of my speech. Although some of the developments have also manifested themselves within handicraft businesses, I will concentrate my attention on the larger industrial enterprises, where this situation has become manifest in a more pronounced way.

As you will know the industrial revolution brought about a radical change in the then existing forms of craftsmanship as they had come into being in the guild system. Craftsmanship within the guild was characterized by the fact that one man who did a certain job had to take care of the manufacture of the entire product. So, for instance, a shoemaker bought the leather from the tanner and made the whole shoe himself. The industrial revolution gave rise to a fundamental change in the way trades were exercised as well as in craftsmanship. Since the invention of the steam-engine, mechanization and, subsequently, automation have assumed large proportions. As a result, small enterprises were enabled to develop into large modern factories, in which a division of labour carried to great lengths resulted in mass production. This division of labour implies that one raw material is no longer handled by one person up to the final product but that the labourers will specialize themselves, each in a definite stage as part of the production process.

Partly in the light of Taylor's ideas, the rationalization of the industrial production apparatus was carried through to ever greater lengths in the course of the following decades.

These changes had a decisive influence on the nature and quality of the operations that have to be done. Craftsmanship as it had developed in pre-industrial society proved to be no longer practicable. The production process was split up to such an extent that for a large group of those employed there exclusively remained partial operations for which only a short adaptation or training period was required.

At the same time some partial operations became so specialized by the developments and refinements of machinery and technical equipment that a new type of craftsmanship was necessary for which highly qualified training courses were required. So division of labour resulted in the creation of trained and unskilled labour as well as in the coming into being of a number of highly-skilled functions. As production processes also became more intricate and harder to control, gradually a number of new functions and occupations in the field of administration, planning, research maintenance and organization came into being. In some of these functions some controlling tasks have been united, in other functions mainly development tasks. In connection with the changes in production methods new tasks and activities were created in the field of distribution of products and services. Gradually some quite new industries have come into being.

In view of the nature of the production processes I have referred to, it is clear that there are constant changes in the nature and substance of trade. Certain functions disappear and other functions get a new substance. Instances are easy to find in many sectors.

What are the consequences of these developments on the way in which the exercise of trades and functions takes

place on the resulting requirements in respect of craftsmanship? First, it may be pointed out that certain forms of craftsmanship are no longer bound to one single product as was the case in an earlier manner of producing. In several industries partial functions are performed which are completely or to a high extent comparable. The new form of craftsmanship which it involves runs across the various production processes. A strong interchangeability of functions has come into being within each industry, but also between the various industries. A clear instance of this phenomenon is the group of operatives. This function used to be restricted mainly to the processing industry, but now we find them also in the textile, metal manufacture, printing and allied industries. The core of the trade is the same in all these industries.

Secondly, in a great number of functions the process of specialization is progressing to a high degree of occupational specialization. This development finds, among other things, its exponent in the trade qualifications required from those who do the jobs, as it is to be seen now at this international vocational manifestation. Also in the handicraft enterprises a great many representatives of this group are to be found.

An increasing number of employees do jobs for which a high degree of technical perfection is required, but which at the same time occupy a smaller and smaller part of the production process. It is gradually being recognized that such an organization of production has some drawbacks. And there are, therefore, developments which more and more tend to involve cooperation with others. Although in this case labourers only perform partial operations, together they are responsible for the product that they manufacture. More and more it is realized that the employee is not a single individual but that, together with other people, he bears the responsibility for what is going on in the enterprise and that a new cooperation is necessary to cope with that responsibility effectively. In this connection I wish to refer to endeavours that have been made in a number of

enterprises to join the various partial operations into greater production units, in which groups of employees work together for the manufacture of complete final products. It stands to reason that this approach is particularly meaningful for the numerous employees who have to do the uninteresting partial jobs.

Incidentally, I wish to emphasize that this cooperation is not only necessary on business economic grounds. It is particularly also the social aspects of labour and the exercise of a trade that make such an arrangement of enterprises and production necessary to cause the employee to feel involved. Democratization of the enterprise and the development of participation there, are, therefore, tendencies which have become more manifest in the last few years. Naturally, these tendencies have their requirements as to the exercise of a trade and they add a dimension to craftsmanship. You will understand that the developments I have mentioned just now have affected vocational training. I mention the following consequences of these developments on vocational training, consequences which partly came to expression in the past and will partly find their expression in the nature and targets of vocational training in a near future:

1. As a result of the rapid changes in the world of trade and as a result of the extension of function fields across a number of production processes, it has become increasingly necessary, particularly in the field of junior vocational training, no longer to direct the training to preparation for highly specific functions, but to function fields, respectively vocational directions. Thus vocational training in the Netherlands has, in a few decades, rightly developed from specific trade schools to training institutions with a wider occupation-directed basis, such as, for instance, mechanical engineering, foodstuff processing, construction engineering. Thus, connections are found with a large number of occupations or specific functions

and the mobility of the apprentice in the labour market is enhanced. In consequence of this and in contrast to the past, students who have finished their studies are to a smaller degree immediately ready in a specific production process and perhaps more than in the past additional adaptation and training-on-the-job periods will be required. It should be realized with all, incidentally often cyclical, objections that this development will be necessary in the light of the occupational structure itself as well as in view of the mobility on the labour market of those concerned.

2. Fortunately and rightly, there is a growing belief that the preparation for a trade should be more than a preparation for technical craftsmanship only. The necessary cooperation in the production process, the rightly growing need of humanisation of labour and the involvement and participation with respect to the business and production organisation require a training which, more than in the past, pays attention to the social aspects of the occupation, to the required knowledge and skill, in order, together with other people to be able to bear responsibility for the work, the labour situation and the enterprise.

This means, among other things, that also in vocational-training courses more attention should be paid to what is generally called general formation and to, of course, very useful and concrete matters as language skill, knowledge of industrial relations, knowledge of human relations, etc., which are necessary in order to participate not only as part of the production process, but also as a full partner in the organization.

Also in respect of this development objections are heard as to the immediate adaptability and the so-called over-schooling of school leavers, but also here it should be realised, apart from all discussion in itself desirable, about connection and continuous adaptation, that, with regard to the exercise of trade and the place of a man in the labour organization, more requirements are rightly made than used to be done in the past.

3. All this does not alter the fact, however, that also technical craftsmanship, the specialized occupational skill, will keep its great value, which will in many cases even increase in view of the developments of the production processes and the economic structure of our country as well as in view of the development and the satisfaction of the people in their labour situation. In view of the new developments I have just mentioned and the necessary occupation of the training period in the junior years of secondary education this will lead to the inevitable and for the greater part already noticeable consequences such as a longer study career for many young people, the extension of trade-directed training possibilities for 16 to 18-year-old people and a better shaping of the connection between education and industry with regard, for instance, to traineeships and apprenticeships. Also apprenticeships play an important part in this development, of course.

Thus education could greatly contribute to the preparation for the exercise of any trade in a wider sense as well as to the development of craftsmanship. Both contributions seem to me of great importance for the people involved and for the economic development of the Netherlands. In this perspective I declare the 23rd International Vocational Manifestation opened.