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Towards the 21st Century

by

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This week's HRI/Post column is despatched to you from Europe where I am leading a six person delegation visiting several old friends of mine at the United Nations International Labor Office and a Hotel School in Geneva.

On the way I dropped in to Brussels to interview Professor Michael Hammer, or "Mr. Re-engineering" as he is sometimes called, and attend a seminar of his. The interview will appear in this column next week and he will definitely be in Bangkok in February. His fascinating seminar held my interest for 8 hours and made me realise that the talk about re-engineering in Thailand is not exactly what he had in mind, as you will see.

In this world of increasing globalization, despite still being very significant, Europe seems to be losing some of its influence. In his lecture Prof. Hammer pointed out that French and German companies were slow to re-engineer because of their deep-rooted cultures. I also believe that Europe could learn more from the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. They are rather insular in their outlook, perhaps because they are closer geographically to N. America than Asia.

I think our government and businessmen must step up their co-operation with Europe in several areas. Hopefully the many European ambassadors who I know read this column will help us. We might even give them space to air their views! Through its Areopa group, with which I am also closely involved, Belgium has been particularly useful to Thailand as a source of information and new management concepts. I believe both Europe and Thailand could profit from more of these strategic alliances.

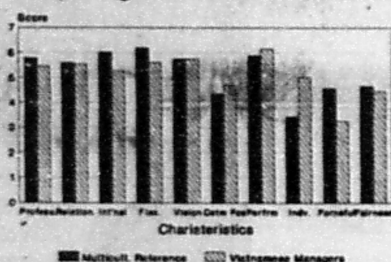
Among other things, the ILO has done an excellent job of highlighting the sociological impact of economic progress, and the HRI has benefited from its work in many ways. However, it struck me that Thai people in general do not have enough access to the United Nations resources, not just in terms of finance, but in terms of publications, seminars and conferences. The UN tends to deal only with government bodies, but I believe it should also open up to academics and the private sector.

During my visit I had an interesting discussion with senior economist Dr. Eddy Lee on the impact of globalization on competitiveness. Dr Lee is a Malaysian, and he said that despite the GATT agreements, the Western world still feels threatened by cheap products from Asia and blames it for the over 10% unemployment. Since the West can no longer use tariffs to protect their markets he said they were using "social concerns", such as child labor and working conditions, instead. Dr. Lee is planning to publish a report explaining how the West can learn from the East Asian economic miracle in terms of industrial relations, on-the-job training, the will to work, and work as part of the Eastern culture.

Indeed we have been learning from Europe for centuries, so perhaps it is time for them to start learning from us!

See you next week!

Comparing Int'nal Characteristics



Source: Dr. F.W. Belbinson, AIT