

Maritime Awareness Week and Nurturing the New Generation

Maritime Awareness Week

The Maritime Awareness Week (MAW) was jointly organized by the Maritime Industry Council (MIC) & the Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA) with the support of numerous associations and institutes in the Maritime Industry. Its primary aim was to raise public awareness of the Maritime Industry, but another aim was to promote careers in the Maritime Industry to younger people, hoping that some of them become the next generation of workers in the Industry.

Events and activities

The **Acting Chief Executive, Henry Tang**, officiated and three hundred guests attended the opening ceremony at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday, 25 October 2010. Other than stressing the strength of Hong Kong's status as a maritime hub, Tang emphasized that the MAW was to demonstrate to the young people the diversified maritime career opportunities both at sea and ashore.

The **Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport), Francis Ho**, opened and two hundred participants attended the Seminar on the Maritime Labour Convention, China Oil Pollution Regulations and Maritime Security on Tuesday, 26 October 2010. The seminar focused on the well-being of seafarers, marine pollution and piracy. This was an event in conjunction with 2010 – Year of the Seafarers.

Volunteers had delivered talks at over ten schools & post secondary institutions on Wednesday 27 October 2010 – “Think Maritime Day” – and guests planted trees at the Maritime Services Training Institute.

The **Director of Marine, Roger Tupper**, opened the Study Centre at the Hong Kong Seamen's Union on Thursday, 28 October 2010 – “Seafarer's Day” – and a church service was held at the Mariners' Club. The Study Centre housed one thousand books for use by candidates attempting various examinations leading to seafarers' qualifications and for reference of seafarers in general.

The **Secretary for Transport and Housing, Eva Cheng** spoke at the luncheon to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the autonomous Hong Kong Shipping Registry on Friday, 29 October 2010. A half-day seminar on pollution was held on the same day.

Four thousand and five hundred visitors visited the Maritime Fair and Government Dockyard Open Day on Saturday, 30 October 2010. This was the first time ever the dockyard was opened to the public.

One hundred and forty people joined the Beach Cleaning Day on Sunday, 31 October 2010 and thirty bags of refuse were collected.

Review

The MAW was a collection of events that mobilized a lot of people in the Maritime Industry and provided them an opportunity to work together for a common goal. From this angle, it was a

success.

The slogan of the MAW was “Go Maritime, See the World”. Apparently the wording was designed by people not working in the Maritime Industry. Therefore another view is whether the events attracted these people, especially the young?

Other than newspaper advertisements, the participation of the public was restricted to the open day of the Government Dockyard. Thousands of visitors, a lot of them relatives or friends of people working for the Industry, attended. These people likely never had a chance to watch a vessel being lifted from water and put on a cradle ashore and never had a chance to look at the bottom of a vessel’s hull and the propellers hanging in the air. Among the visitors, a small number of them were youngsters.

If the MAW had been planned to promote careers in the Maritime Industry, then the message probably did not reach enough young people.

Careers start from hobbies

To build up the next generation of employees in the Industry will require a prolonged effort using both conventional and innovative approaches. If a theory says given a choice people would do something they prefer, then another theory might say people prefer to follow career paths that are related to their hobbies. Apparently no study/survey has been done on this, but it would be interesting to find out the correlation.

Model building was a popular hobby when the current generation was young. Models of aircraft carriers, battleships and torpedo boats were constructed and some were motorized and shown-off at paddling pools. Surely it would have affected the life of some lovers of this kind of hobby and prompted them to choose the Maritime Industry after growing-up.

A lot of overseas examples are observed where industries which have engaged young people and give them a positive first impression of what is going on with their industries eventually employ those people in the industry.

Overseas experience

DHL operates an Innovation Centre located near Bonn, Germany attracting children and adults. Exhibition halls in the Centre display the application of techniques in business processes and the application of state of the art technology such as RFID and concepts of future facilities & services. ‘Future’ is the key word. The Centre publishes colourful pamphlets for children, no doubt to nurture the interest of children in technology.

<http://dsi.dhl-innovation.com/en/innovationcenter/index>

Another similar project is the METRO Group Innovation Center, also in Germany. It displays more applications of RFID in the domestic front and the industrial front.

www.metrogroup.de
www.future-store.org

Sometimes the states/countries initiate the engagement. To illustrate, numerous museums and exhibitions in the US capital of Washington D.C. are there to impress youngsters. Led by teachers, students listen to speeches of guides or touch buttons with interactive displays or sound descriptions. No doubt some of the young would be induced to develop hobbies that have an impact on their future life.

The Singapore Science Centre is another example that represents state efforts to educate the youth by unconventional means.

Even though the above examples are not directly related to the Maritime Industry, they indicate one way or the other methods that can be seriously considered.

What do we have in Hong Kong

The Maritime Museum, the Science Museum, the Fire Department's *Grantham* near Tai Koo Shing at Hong Kong East offer regular attraction and are directly or indirectly related to the Maritime Industry. The Maritime Museum is the prime centre of attraction. With its relocation to the Central, it will play a much more important role.

Other than facilities, the Sea Scout and the Sea Cadet Corps are opportunities for young people to learn skills related to maritime life.

Other resources include book(s) written about life at sea.

Secondary schools students

If senior secondary students were the audience of the career talks delivered on 27 October 2010, most likely the activity was the students' Other Learning Experience (OLE). OLE is part of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) initiative to broaden the students' exposure to the world surrounding them. Formerly known as extra-curricular activities, OLE is a structured approach to organize, conduct and evaluate/record those activities which are not part of the academic curricular. OLE could be an opportunity to introduce to students the interesting aspects of the Maritime Industry.

Another channel to educate secondary students is Applied Learning (ApL), also part of the NSS adopted by some schools. This is a career orientated curriculum leading to further studies and a career path after graduation from school.

Primary schools students

There should be no structural approach for primary school students but access to electronic games associated with maritime and shipping and visit to the Maritime Museum and to ships will do.

Kindergarten pupils

A lot that a person has seen and heard during his/her young age are imbedded in his/her sub-conscious mind. Kindergarten is a place where activities ensure youngsters have happy learning experience and good impression of life. Stories about the sea and ships would do.

Conclusion

Something should be done now for the future. To help the young develop 'maritime' hobbies in the hope that some of them might be interested in developing career in the Maritime Industry is not a serious science but it is worth looking at what other countries are doing and what we are lacking and set strategies to tackle the manpower issues of the future.

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