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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE WOOD TECHNICIAN: A COMMENT

Technical education has been one of my sustained interests. I have had training in machine shop theory and practice and as a forestry technician. These have served me well. I was also privileged to be directly involved in the establishment of a wood technician training program at a state two-year college. There has never been any question of the need in our laboratories or in industry for a wood technician. In fact, it has always seemed that there was justification for at least one technician for each professional. If I may borrow a phrase from the U.S. Marines, the lament has been "Give us a few good men."

During the last twenty to thirty years, a few programs to train wood technicians have been established. The results, if we compare input with output, have been mediocre. We may cite many reasons or alibies to explain this performance, most of which could be lumped under social changes. There are two significant stumbling blocks, however, more closely related to us which I believe to be obstacles in the development of wood technicians. One is of long standing, and the other is to some extent a result of our own action or inaction.

At the high school level, when a student demonstrates poor motivation and performance in general studies, he is often directed toward a trade or technical school curriculum. If he is otherwise alert and promising, his preselected craft is usually in the electro-mechanical area. If he demonstrates poor performance in this area, he is then recommended for automotive mechanics. When it is found that he cannot remove and reassemble a carburetor or valve cover, he is then transferred to the lowest denominator, the wood shop. To many educators this is the equitable rating of design, craftsmanship, and technology in the area of wood. This is their image of wood technology.

During the last two or three decades while wood technician programs were in their introductory phase, the two-year community college system developed nationwide. It seemed natural that the wood technician programs should be in this environment. The results were, however, that those who considered studies in wood to be the lowest of crafts and sciences were now influencing administration, curriculum, admissions, and staffing for the wood technician programs.

The forestry technician programs have a longer and more successful history. While we concede that the leaves may be more alluring than the chips, it is also true that in most forestry technician programs the local university's department of forestry was the parent guide and umbrella.

In conclusion, I believe the following objectives should be considered:

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3. The face and back plies retained substantially more CuO than As₂O₅. However, this difference was smaller in the cross-band plies.
4. The inner plies were made from difficult-to-treat species: spruce, fir, and hemlock. Microscopic examinations of these plies showed that the copper-containing compounds of the preservative were evenly spread even in the cores.
5. Retention of toxic elements in individual plies and the spread of preservative at microscopic levels as monitored by copper-containing compounds would suggest good protection of CZAA-treated plywood against biodegradation. Treatments with higher salt concentrations in the treating solution would probably result in oxide retentions sufficient for protection of the plywood even in ground contact exposures.
6. The chrome azurol-S staining method appeared to be reliable for detection of copper-containing compounds penetrating cell walls to various degrees, and was suitable for microscopic examination of CZAA-treated wood.

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The Wood Technician: A Comment

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1. Improved communication with students and teachers in the public system regarding the profession of wood technology.
2. More direct influence upon the direction of wood technician programs.

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