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A CASE FOR POLITICAL ACTION BY WOOD TECHNOLOGISTS

The position paper beginning on page 308 was presented on behalf of the Society of Wood Science and Technology to the National Conference on Research Planning for Forests and Associated Rangelands. The paper describes how our Society "promotes the wise and judicious use of the world's wood resources" and gives some background to the Society position on forestry research needs. The relation between research in wood science and technology and forestry is described in Lassen's editorial in the last issue [9(3):171]. We should note with concern Lassen's skepticism that funding would be available for the 37% increase in forestry research that the U.S. Forest Service and forestry schools feel will be necessary to achieve goals of the National Plan.

Wood technologists must take an active voice to get funding necessary to execute the National Plan. We have traditionally informed others of the wise and judicious use of the forest resource. Many gains made in utilization of wood have occurred because wood technologists had the foresight to develop methods for more complete wood utilization so that when political and economic conditions were right, "new" practices could be put to use. The need for such foresight has not passed.

It is increasingly important to be aware of the necessity for political efforts required to accomplish many reasonable goals that can be established on a professional basis. For example, the Honorable Len Marchand, Canadian Environment Minister responsible for the Canadian Forestry Service, in his address on 13 December 1977 to the

Canadian Institute of Forestry, observed the great need for improved forest management, and stated that foresters should take their cause to the political arena to ensure government action on improved forest management. When Mr. Marchand told the foresters they must "get involved with the political process and make it work" for them, he could just as well have been addressing the international wood technology community about the necessity to initiate increased government support of forest products research so that we can make the best use of the wood fiber foresters intend to grow for consumption by the public, with their increasing requirements for shelter and other forest products commodities.

It is imperative that we enter the political arena not only to mold wise government actions to ensure best use of our wood supply, but also to prevent unwise government actions that may hinder research and public education activities. The position paper presented by SWST is an example of input into the policy formulation process that must now be backed by political contacts by wood technologists and other concerned citizens to their legislators so that recommendations in the National Plan can be implemented. Considering the many facets of contemporary government involvement, it becomes increasingly important that "wise" government actions be nurtured by those with the professional background and foresight to perceive actions necessary to assure national programs of benefit to all citizens. Political action to strive for the additional research outlined in the National Plan is imperative if those goals are to be met.

Potentially unwise government action must also be dealt with in the political arena even more vigorously. Action has been initiated recently by the Canadian government to "privatize" the two Forest Products Laboratories of the Canadian Forestry Service as a government expediency to cut costs some \$3.3 million (*Globe and Mail*, August 17, 1979). This action is of grave concern to wood technologists who recognize the necessity for strong government involvement in forest products research. Such partisan political action is obviously counter to goals of the type outlined in the Society's position paper. In 1976, forest products provided Canada some \$5.7 billion in favorable balance of trade, while government spending for forest products research to ensure future foreign trade was a tiny fraction of this amount. Reduced government support of these two fine laboratories presents a very real danger

that effectiveness of the laboratories will be emasculated to the detriment of not only the Canadian people, who rely heavily on resource industries, but also to the world forest products community, including those nations to whom Canada sells her forest products. The reduced government support of these laboratories is for political reasons, and certainly cannot be justified on any technical—or fiscal—grounds. Technical quality of these laboratories has been excellent; reduced government support may well cause harm due to resignations of some of the best scientists in the world as well as slowing the research pace of remaining scientists.

Political action to prevent such government action is a prime example of the necessity for political action by wood technologists and other concerned citizens.

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