

# WOOD AND FIBER

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF WOOD AND FIBER

Bob Hoyle's "The View From Here" in *Wood and Fiber* 3(3) on the wood technologist and his stagnant status spurred my jotting down some thoughts on his situation. Allow me first to briefly note several points Bob made:

1) Closure of several wood science and technology programs of high caliber in our universities has occurred within the last five years.

2) The engineering community has paid scant constructive attention to wood as a reliable material of construction. Forestry schools have been responsible for the only substantial programs that prepare people with backgrounds in the materials technology of the wood and fiber industry.

3) The wood and fiber industry still doesn't know what a wood technologist is.

4) No progress has been made by SWST or FPRS in providing the wood technologist with recognition as a professional in the wood industry.

5) SWST is small in membership and the public relations job on the importance of wood technology to the wood industry is big.

To suggest that I have solutions for recognition of wood technologists is vain, but I suggest exploration of the following items:

1) Recognize that wood science and technology is basically a materials science specialty.

2) Wood science and technology curriculums contain most elements of general science and engineering curricula.

3) Engineers generalize their training in several areas—civil, electrical, mechanical, and chemical—and have attained recogni-

tion for their ability to solve technological problems.

4) In the present environmentally oriented society, wood looms large in importance as a natural resource—a *renewable* resource.

A directed conclusion of this is that I believe a student basically trained in engineering or science of all materials with a specialty in wood will bring a broader outlook to the wood industry. He would also have the breadth of education to enable him to be gainfully employed in other industries so that more choices of a vocation are open to him as a result of his education. This alone would materially strengthen his bargaining position and prestige.

A wood technologist as a specialty of engineering! Heresy, you say! I suggest that an alternative educational path for wood technologists is possible. Whether it is desirable is arguable. The need to minimize environmental effects in the conversion of natural resources will soon show wood products in a most promising light. If engineering materials science curriculums did not wish to include the study of wood as a construction material in the past, the time is ripe now! If a merger is possible, both the materials science and wood science programs will gain.

One could go on to examine the broader implications to the Society of Wood Science and Technology. I will refrain and trust that this provides enough fruit for thought on the future training of the wood scientist and technologist.

You guessed it; I'm a biased engineer!

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