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AN EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR *WOOD AND FIBER SCIENCE*?

Does *Wood and Fiber Science* have an editorial policy? Should it? What difference might it make?

No, maybe, and I don't know yet, in that order.

My committee has begun work which *may* lead to an Editorial Policy Statement for *Wood and Fiber Science*. As chairman, I will strive to be perfectly objective as the committee addresses the question of editorial policy, but as an SWST member, I would be less than honest if I did not state my opinion that we *do* need an editorial policy. I am not talking so much about a policy for the technical aspects of printing high-quality research papers. We certainly want that to continue, but we have always done that rather well, in my opinion. I am talking about *Wood and Fiber Science* as the voice of *something*, not just a collection of professional papers. Do we want to be the voice of our subscribers? If so, we need to do something in addition to what we are doing at present, because at present our members are 99⁴⁴/₁₀₀% silent.

If you want to know what reporters and journalists actually think about issues (aside from their "objective" reporting), you can go to Agronski and Company, the McLaughlin Group, *Washington Week in Review*, or the editorial pages of any major newspaper. If you want opinions about resource issues, you can read the letters to the editor in *American Forests*. (I finally got one printed this fall, but that editor gets so much opinion that he must very carefully select letters to print.) No one claims that letter-writers represent the total spectrum of readers, nor do George Will and James Kilpatrick represent the total spectrum of political thoughts. But there is a clamor to be heard, which I do not sense in the readers of *Wood and Fiber Science*. We are all so scientific and objective. Don't we have opinions within our area of expertise, which, expressed, might influence others, and might help determine a course to follow? Does it make any difference if we are able to speak out as SWST or FPRS members on the issues? Does wood get a "fairer shake" as a result? If not, maybe I should not be concerned about the silence. It is easy to live with, because no one gets very excited.

Some would argue that because we cannot afford the space in our publication to print opinions anyway, it is good that we don't get any. But that is something like saying it is better if members of Congress do not receive any mail, because it takes so much time to read it. But feedback is the stuff out of which policy is made. If you don't have it, you cannot take a position, and you might lose an opportunity for putting in a good word for wood.

DONALD E. NELSON

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