

## OPENING ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT

**Roger S. Smith**

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

I welcome you to the second annual meeting of the Canadian Wood Preservation Association, where we stand, or rather sit, somewhat besieged by problems and grave concerns. Our vital lumber industry is probably in one of its worst positions since the 1930's, aggravated, we are told, by the severe slowdown of the building industry in the United States. Mills are forced into temporary, or even permanent, closure and an increasing portion of our work force is being made idle and non-productive. The cost of borrowing money has risen to a prohibitive, if not a fatal level, with severe consequences on prospective and existing homeowners. Many hard working Canadians will be forced to relinquish their dear and cherished dream of a home of their own. The spectra of environmental pollution continues to haunt our daily lives. We are told that products of our industrial society are causing the so-called "Greenhouse Effect" and one day in the future our planet will become too hot, and various dire and disastrous consequences will render life as we know it impossible. The seas are succumbing to ocean dumping, acid rain, and the general exploitation by man, the ultimate destroyer. Our blessed planet seems incapable of supporting its 4.3 billion inhabitants with any resemblance of a normal life style. Millions starve, succumb to disease and gross pollution, whilst the privileged or powerful few survive to contemplate the situation. Leaders of countries convene and debate in a vain attempt to bring peaceful solutions to the problems besetting the have-not versus the have nations. The recent results from Cancun clearly display the failure of our leaders to cope with this complex dilemma.

So, what, you may well ask, is this to do with CWPA and our interests in the protection and preservation of wood products? Surely we are protectionists, we are aware of our environment, we have been bequeathed the responsibility of preserving Canada's greatest natural asset. We are the good guys...or are we? Gathered together today we have some of the most intelligent and forward-thinking people from Canada and the United States. We have concerned people from industry, government, universities, consultancies, trade associations, and various research institutes, but are we really aware of the cross roads at which we stand today. As inheritors of the industrial revolution, which forever changed the face of the western world, beginning with the use and development of steam power by Watt in 1769, we have accepted a huge responsibility - that of the scientific conquest of our planet, if not our solar system.

Our inability to find peaceful methods to achieve this end and bring a kind of scientific utopia to all mankind is causing us all concern. We somehow feel that every year we deserve a better (whatever this means) standard of living. The ubiquitous electronic tube tells us what we should have, and even shows us how happy and joyful we will be with all these gadgets and devices that man has so cleverly constructed; all now essential to our everyday life (so we are led to believe).

Here, in Canada, we sit astride a natural wealth of a kind that ironically provided Watt with his source of power over 200 years ago. Canada's naturally renewable softwood forests once again will become a source of power for our homes and industry. These forests will help to provide the fuels for our next steps or strides along the highway of industrial progress. What other resource can provide mankind simultaneously with shelter, warmth, clothing, food, drugs, books, art, music and an endless diversity of comfort and joy. Now, today, in Vancouver, at the very fountainhead of this resource, we will ponder the wisdom of our actions and attempt to resolve the balance of the use of our forest products resource with its protection. Whether we are considering lumber, poles, posts, or a finished structure, a beautiful home or a graceful wooden arch, we inevitably balance a need for economic production against a requirement for longevity. One developing theme that will increasingly dominate our thinking in the 1980's will be that of long-term protection. The age of proligacy has gone and we are all now guardians of our future resource. The chemical and biological protection of lumber will provide urgent problems requiring compromising and difficult solutions. Our scientific

abilities will be stretched as our research costs increase. But the scientific patrons of previous centuries have largely disappeared and today every person shares a financial responsibility for the research future of Canada. However, without those collective associations, those professional societies which provide a meeting place for scientific discovery, the optimization of research effort would be most difficult.

Today, on November 2, 1981, we celebrate our second annual meeting and I'm sure that our brief two days of deliberations, explorations and resolutions will provide Canada with a firm and positive step forward into the difficult 1980's.

I wish you all a most successful meeting and the grace to accept what we cannot change and the energy and resolution to shape events that clearly need our attention.

Thank you and good luck.