

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Canadian Wood Preservation Association. While preparing for this meeting I received a telephone call from one of our directors, who suggested that if I needed any material while developing this address, then I should re-read the address given by Dr. Roger Smith in 1981. And so I went back and read that address. The opening paragraph certainly made interesting reading. It spoke of a major lumber recession, with sawmills being forced to close, interest rates climbing causing hardship to Canadians, and the concern over environmental pollution including acid rain. Certainly, all topics that we can relate to in 1990. So has so little changed? Have we made no progress? After careful reflection, I would like to respectfully suggest that 1990 is indeed a new situation, with a new framework to which we all must relate.

Consider the pressure being exerted by environmentalists. Did we really expect that we would wake up one day and it would be gone? Can we really expect that with a single stroke, we can eliminate our responsibility for ensuring an environmentally sensitive industry? No, an awareness of the environmental impact of what we do, has become an everyday fact of life - and it will stay that way. Perhaps this is best illustrated by reference to the views expressed by Richard Clarke, CEO, of Pacific Gas and Electric which was published in the Fortune magazine in February. Recognizing the long term role of the environment in shaping corporate policy, he appointed an environmentalist from one of the major west coast wilderness groups to a senior management position. All corporate decisions regarding development projects had to be approved by this person, who was involved in the detailed planning process at the outset. This management decision recognized the sound economics of building the environmental factors into the planning process, rather than as an "add on" package at the end of the process. It also recognized a simple fact of life - the concern for the environment is here to stay - and we should plan accordingly.

A second factor which is significantly different from 1981, is the public perception of wood preservation. Though far from perfect, the development of the "Do It Yourself" industry speaks "volumes" for the progress achieved. Remember all the hard work needed to gain recognition for the preserved wood foundation system. Remember how we watched in trepidation the fluctuations in the pole or fencepost markets. Changes in these market sectors still cause major effects on our industry, but through diversification we have built in greater flexibility to respond to such pressures. And flexibility is one of the keys to future prosperity. We need to continue to increase our market diversification. One way to achieve this is "niche" marketing. This can work well for wood preservation - in that our plants are of an appropriate size to respond to a particular customer's needs. We need to work more closely with our individual retail outlets to identify and explore new market opportunities, that are not necessarily national, but may exist in specific geographical situations. In this way, treaters can take maximum advantage of *their* special knowledge of *their* customer's needs.

A third area where our industry is vastly different than ten years ago is in the area of technological innovation. Computerized treating plants with fixed line

delivery systems are routine these days. Novel incising processes allow us to treat almost all Canadian softwoods. Accelerated fixation of CCA has become routine already in some plants, and will become so in all plants in the near future. Industry sponsored R & D is slowly increasing - and recognition of the importance of developing our human resource, vital if we are to sustain the drive for technical and marketing innovation, is being expressed through increased support to university groups such as those at the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto.

A fourth and final point worth considering is the tremendous pressure being exerted to maximize the benefits accrued through harvesting our forest resource. We see demands to curtail cutting of redwoods in California or old growth forest stands in B.C. How better to relieve this pressure on the forest product industry than by enhancing the long term performance of Canada's vast wealth of under-utilized, non-durable wood species. We need to look for opportunities to work with other associations such as CITW, COFI, and CWC, to collectively promote wood as a valuable renewable resource.

Remember, of all structural building materials, few can undergo true recycling - that is regeneration of the components at the molecular level, to reproduce the basic material, just as it was before. True, this is also possible for a few other materials, like glass and steel. However, wood is the only material for which this regeneration (or recycling) is possible without a vast input of man made energy, and which can provide at the same time not only pleasure and beauty, but also a home for wildlife. What is more, it is the only basic building material that we can actually increase the available volume. (This can be achieved through careful replanting and management of our forests). **For wood is alive and the limitations that we see only reflect our lack of vision.**

During the next two days we are going to hear much about technical advances covering such diverse subjects as incising, new chemicals, and the cleaning up of old treating plant sites using sunlight or microbes. By sharing our experiences at meetings such as this, we can ensure the well being of our industry and provide opportunities for growth into the 21st Century and beyond. I hope that you will all actively participate in the debate and wish you all an enjoyable meeting. Thank you.

John N.R. Ruddick