

BROADENING KILN CLUB ACTIVITIES

By John B. Grantham

In welcoming you to Portland for the opening of your 15th Annual Meeting, I would like to compliment your officers, and particularly your program chairman, on the breadth and balance of this year's program. As I interpret the printed program, you will hear four papers on fundamentals of wood drying; four on applied studies of drying practices; and two on related topics, namely machine grading of lumber and proposed lumber size-moisture content specifications.

Such a diversified program should be of interest to those associated with any phase of the lumber industry, and I hope that all are represented in the audience this morning. Those from a timber department should be mindful of the causes of degrade in the seasoning of western red cedar, Englemann spruce, and western hemlock. Those from engineering departments should be alert to the reports of boundary layer effects on drying and the potential of solar dryers. Those from sales departments should be interested in developments in grade standardization, moisture content specifications, machine grading, and in recent findings regarding in-service moisture content and the seasoning and machining degrade that is peculiar to certain species. It goes without saying that those in the sawmill department and those in research or management should have an overall interest in the program.

If you do not have the broad industry representation that your program warrants, can you do more to stimulate wider attendance? I know that there has been concern about kiln club attendance nationwide, so without taking roll this morning I would suggest some actions for your consideration.

First, continue your commendable effort to broaden the program at kiln club meetings and publicize this action through every channel available.

Second, make a personal effort to bring a nonmember to each meeting.

Third, through the kiln clubs, encourage the offering of a short course which deals more broadly than do current seasoning courses with subjects related to drying.

Fourth, stimulate the interest of other men in your organization in technical short courses wherever they are offered.

Fifth, broaden your own interest and responsibility in the industry whenever possible.

To elaborate briefly on each of these suggestions: A continuing effort to expand the scope of your meeting programs will attract additional attendance providing the effort is well publicized. The Pacific Southwest Section of the Forest Products Research Society (covering southern California and Arizona) gave a startling demonstration of this fact during the past winter. Previous meetings of the section had been largely social and were poorly attended. This past January, the Section organized a 2-day technical meeting, publicized the program through a series of announcements, and drew an attendance of 243 from seven states.

Competition for the time of those responsible men you wish to attract is keen, and it is no simple job to develop worthwhile programs. On the other hand, in striving to broaden your programs you tap new sources of interesting subject matter and speakers. Varied programs -- by attracting wider attendance -- will acquaint more people with the importance of seasoning to many facets of the lumber industry.

Publicizing meetings is not an art in which technical organizations excel. Therefore, it is doubly important for each member to take a personal part in promoting attendance. Review the program of each meeting with the idea of interesting some non-member in that particular program and then exercise

your persuasive powers to get him there.

The movement to broaden meeting programs should be accompanied by a parallel effort to promote a more comprehensive course in lumber seasoning and related subjects. I understand that many of you have expressed a desire for an adjunct to the seasoning course -- one that would deal with wood technology in greater depth. Another approach would be a short course on industry developments in the fields of edge and end gluing, laminating, finishing, overlaying, standardization and merchandising, all of which are related in some degree to lumber seasoning.

More comprehensive short courses would draw from other segments of the lumber industry and develop a wider appreciation of the effects of good drying on the gluing, finishing, treating and strength properties of lumber.

This greater appreciation of the importance of good seasoning practice could in turn lead to the assignment of greater responsibilities to kiln foremen. For example, a kiln foreman might be given responsibility for establishing and maintaining a sampling program to improve uniformity of moisture content or for conducting periodic degrade studies such as those to be described at this meeting. Expanded short courses could have the additional advantage of helping prepare kiln operators or foremen for added responsibility. A single short course can serve only as a stimulant but could start a desirable trend.

Kiln foremen and operators have contributed much to the advancement of the lumber industry and could contribute still more. To do so, they need greater support and opportunity from management. Stronger management support would come through greater knowledge and appreciation of the importance of seasoning. Such knowledge could be imparted to present and future managers through expanded activities of the kiln clubs.

Two steps that could be taken immediately are: first broaden the scope of kiln club meetings to promote wider attendance, and second urge the offering of expanded short courses that cover topics related to seasoning in greater depth and thus attract broader industry representation.