

SOCIAL PROMOTION OF FOREST WORKERS — THE ROLE OF LABOUR ORGANIZATIONS

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SELOSTE:

METSÄTYÖNTEKIJÄIN SOSIAALINEN KEHITTÄMINEN — TYÖNTEKIJÄJÄRJESTÖJEN OSUUS

The demand for forest products in Europe seems to exceed the total supply in the future although the market fluctuations occasionally affect diminishing the timber demand. New forest industries in the areas of fast growing trees will have their own influence through the world. Alongside the amount of forest production, the demand for labour input depends on the development of the structure of production and of the productivity of work. In this respect mechanization of harvesting will have its long-lasting influence inspite of that the most advantageous degree of mechanization varies a great deal in different countries of the world.

Despite of the growth in forestry production, the number of forestry workers has decreased considerably in many countries owing to various factors. On the other hand the share of professional forest workers has increased providing more permanent working conditions.

The permanence of work fundamentally affects the life of a forest worker. It has influence on the income level, on the social position of the forest worker and on the standard of living.

The appreciation of the occupation of a forest worker will be increased mainly within the increasing mechanization of forest work. It requires additional amount of vocational training. Simultaneously improved wages, competition for skilled labour and the rise in the standard of living among forest workers will lead to increased social appreciation.

In order to influence their benefits forest workers have organized themselves into trade unions. They activate their members in to helping the unions to attain their aims. Trade unions try to influence the policies of forestry and forest labour. In this respect they are in contact with political parties concerned.

The questions of labour policy occupy a central position in the mutual relations of the labour market organizations. Concerning questions of wages, research activity, working conditions, rationalization, improvement of housing facilities and other living conditions, much promotion has been achieved within a keen mutual cooperation.

Forest worker unions have to keep in touch with the offices and authorities regulating and controlling matters within forest work. Consequently they have to deal with several offices and authorities which requires a sufficient executive capacity of the union.

Especially in some East-European countries attention is being paid to the motivation of forest workers. Appreciation of the workers with the best working records is shown in the form of public praise, remuneration, and special holiday arrangements. In some western countries e.g. logging skill competitions collect large amounts of spectators.

It seems that the standard of living among forest workers has been and still is lower than in many other occupations. However, their occupation is becoming comparable to many other occupations. Progress is going to follow the same lines of development that exist elsewhere in society.

1. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE POSITION OF FOREST WORKERS

11. The Demand for Forest Products

The possibilities of work for the forest worker participating in the primary forest production depend on the demand for forest products and on the relation between supply and demand. The possibilities of work depend also on seasonal and market fluctuations as well as on the prevailing trend in the demand for timber.

The prognosis of the FAO drafted at the end of 1976 aptly illustrates the long term trend in the demand for timber. The demand for the present forest industry products will accordingly be doubled in Europe during the period of thirty years from 1970 to the year 2000. On the other hand, the timber resources of Europe will not grow in the same ratio, so that by the year 2000 the total timber demand in Europe may exceed the total supply by some 35 %.

International market fluctuations greatly affect the demand. During the economic recess, which has continued for example in Europe for several years as from the middle of the 1970's, the decline in the demand in consumer countries has caused a lasting shortage of employment and even unemployment. The situation has also been affected by the new forest industries in the areas of fast growing trees, the influence of which can not by any means be regarded as a temporary phenomenon.

12. The Demand for Labour Input

Alongside the amount of forest production, the demand for labour input depends on the development of the structure of production and of the productivity of work.

The structure of production has changed to a large extent in most of the forest industrial countries during the recent decades. A big amount of work has been transferred

from forests to concentrated timber handling sites and to factories. Debarking and storing in forest as well as some phases of timber measurement have been diminished. Longer and more labour saving wood assortments have been chosen for production. Transport of timber by human and animal power has been mostly mechanized, and the organization of timber harvesting has been developed. This has greatly reduced the demand for labour input in the harvesting and transport.

On the other hand progress in the silvicultural care of forests and the growing demand for timber are going to increase the demand for labour in silviculture. In particular the reforestation of low-productive areas and deserts as well as forest cultivation, where the possibilities of mechanization seem more limited than in timber harvesting, are going to require an increasing input of forest work. The demand for timber will also grow with the necessity of using harvesting residues and waste as fuel owing to the vast increases in the price of oil, and with the need to start cultivating rapidly growing tree species to be used as sources of energy.

The productivity of forest work can be further raised by supplanting the human work in forests by mechanical work which, however, necessitates trained skilled man power. The economy of mechanization depends, however, to a high degree on the price relations between human and mechanical work. The most advantageous degree of mechanization therefore varies a great deal in different countries of the world.

The raising of productivity by means of high mechanization extends its influence also outside the limits of forestry, especially if it is carried out at a rapid pace. Thus, the heavy reduction of seasonal work has in some countries led to a lower standard of living for the people living in rural areas,

and to a rapid desolation of the countryside. On the other hand it has given birth to a trained forest labour power employed throughout the year.

The desolation of rural areas will, presumably, continue. For instance in Norway about 50 % of the total population resided in the countryside in 1950, while the percentage is estimated to be only about 20 % in 1980.

13. The Demand for Forest Labour

Despite of the growth in forestry production the number of forestry workers has decreased in many countries owing to the various factors. The amount of timber harvested per forest worker is now in several countries threefold compared to the situation 15 years ago. For example in Finland, where the annual growth of timber has been about 60 million cu.m., the average number of forest workers dropped from 142 000 persons to 52 000 between the years 1960—75.

With an increase in the numbers of permanent forest workers the age structure of the workers has remained favourable, because young age classes mostly have been employed as permanent workers. The average age of forest workers in Finland has been 35 years during last decades. About one third of the forest workers are in age under 30 years. The permanent labour power and the diminishing of the rural population have decreased the share of farmers doing forest work in wintertime. Earlier the peak figure in forest labour employed during the winter season was threefold compared to the lowest number of workers during a year, today it is only double.

In addition to the work improvement referred, the progress of the country's economic life and the subsequent changes in the social structure as well as the labour and mechanization policies have contributed to this kind of development. It seems likely that the positive trend in productivity will continue. The demand for labour will generally decrease and the labour power in forest work will become even more permanent in many countries.

14. Other Factors

In this paper by forest workers are meant all persons between 18—64 years who perform salaried forest work at least 50 days in a year. Some of them may be permanently, other temporarily employed. As seasonal forest workers are here considered persons doing paid forest work 51—100 days a year. As professional forest workers are here considered workers who do forest work for pay at least 100 days per year.

The permanence of the work agreement fundamentally affects the life of the worker. In forest work, however, work agreements are often temporary, and workers less skilled in their jobs than other workers with permanent work agreements. The permanence of work is also a guarantee of a steadier level of wages. It enables the worker to make plans for family life and organized living conditions.

The income level is to a great extent dependent on continuity in obtaining work. If forest work is carried out only as work bringing in an additional income to the main occupation — agriculture for instance — it may be possible to guarantee the worker's yearly income level with forest work of only a few months. For professional forest workers, on the other hand, a sufficient amount of annual work has to be provided also during poor market conditions. Especially in piece work the income level of the worker depends besides his occupational skill also greatly on the age and health of the worker. His peak earning years are between 30 and 40 after which age his earning capacity starts to diminish gradually at first, and more rapidly as he grows older. The security of this income level is thus also closely connected with a secure pension and the age of retirement.

Besides his income level the social position of the forest worker is based on the concept of the standard of living. According to the United Nations committee of experts this covers health, nutrition, education, working conditions, housing, security, clothing, recreation, and human rights. The level of the forest workers' income and living standard have an effect on forest work and forest workers. Therefore, improvement

of these factors also strengthens the social position of forest workers.

The skill and know-how in forest work have previously been passed on from father to son and have not required a specially organized vocational training. As in addition sufficient labour has been available for forest work, the heavy and weakly paid forest work has not earlier achieved much social recognition. Within its own branch forest work has always been regarded as work requiring high occupational skill.

Social appreciations change slowly in regard to the customary forest work.

2. ACTIVITY OF EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS

21. Organizing among Forest Workers

In order to influence the conditions and advantages to be gained in the occupation, mostly professional forest workers have organized themselves into trade unions and federations in several forest countries.

In forest trades the workers are more scattered than are the people in population centres, which hampers the organizing of forest workers. In Scandinavian countries the oldest trade unions in the fields of agriculture and forestry were founded over 50 years ago. In many countries about one half and in some countries nearly all the workers in the branch belong to trade unions. As forest work becomes more permanent in character the amount of workers diminishes while simultaneously the number of members in the trade unions grows. As a rule this tends to increase the activity and motivation in order to improve the work environment and working conditions.

In some countries forest workers are organized into unions of their own, in others they belong to federations including several trades. In the Scandinavian countries there are, for example, the following forest workers' unions:

Sweden: Svenska Skogsarbetareförbundet (Swedish Forest Workers' Union)

Norway: Norsk Skog- og Landarbeiderforbund (Norwegian Forest and Farm Workers' Union)

Instead, the appreciation of the trade in forest work will increase mainly within the increasing mechanization of forest work thus requiring better vocationally trained workers. Simultaneously, improved wages, competition for labour and the rise in the standard of living among forest workers will lead to increased social appreciation. Social developments in different parts of the world have any way led to an increasing appreciation of physical work. Further mechanization will no doubt increase this appreciation.

Denmark: Specialarbejderforbundet (Special Workers' Union)

Finland: Maaseututyöväen liitto (Rural Workers' Union)

The unions aim at the largest possible membership. By means of vocational training and other activities they hope to activate their members in to helping the unions to attain their aims. They wish to give their members opportunity to participate in and to control the activities of the unions so as to intensify the working methods and forms of activity. In this respect education of members, of the labour protection personnel, and of workers' appointed representatives is being carried out. The union members are helped in their difficulties by means of unemployment funds among others.

National trade unions cooperate also on an international level. The Nordic Federation of Building and Forest Workers (NBTF) has been active already for 20 years. Trade union matters are also dealt with in the International Labour Organization (ILO). In addition there are other international organizations and forms of cooperation in the branch.

22. Cooperation with Political Parties

In many countries the trade union organizations try to influence the policies of forestry and forest labour. In this

respect they naturally try to influence the political parties of the country and are in close cooperation primarily with the parties which they consider to be closest to their aims. The central questions in this activity are the supply and demand of labour, the training and recruiting of man power, wages, questions of working conditions, labour protection, social questions including living and housing, rationalization and mechanization, as well as questions connected with the social appreciation of forest work.

23. Cooperation with Employer Organizations

The questions of labour policy occupy a central position also in the mutual relations of the labour market organizations. Probably most time has been given to the questions of wages. Annual agreements on terms of working have often been reached after prolonged and strained negotiations only, indeed in some countries strikes have been resorted to. For their part the employee organizations control that these agreements are being observed.

Research activity is needed in order to find out the suitability of new methods and machines as well as the basis of applied wages, tariffs, measuring methods etc.

The labour market organizations have to cooperate within these questions. In some countries, e.g. in Sweden and Finland, the employers finance their own research institutes.

In cooperation between the labour market organizations for instance in Scandinavian countries it is evident that through this activity considerable progress as well as improvements in the living conditions of forest workers have been achieved. The improvement in the housing facilities has been most noticeable. When seasonal forest work has altered into the round-the-year employment it has been possible to build new houses with financial support from the employers and the state. In Finland the forest workers as a rule own the house they live in as the majority of them are still owners of small farms. Along with the building of new houses the system of living in crowded lodgings on the work sites is

being abandoned in favour of living at home with daily transport to the work sites.

As a result of cooperation may be mentioned the Committee for Work Safety in the Branch of Forestry which has been established by the Finnish labour market organizations. Its aims are the general development and intensification of labour protection in work places, the instruction of persons cooperating in the field of labour protection. Its field organization is based on legislation.

24. Cooperation with State Offices and Public Authorities

Forest workers' organizations also have to be in contact with the offices and authorities regulating and controlling matters within forest work, such as:

- work safety and prevention of accidents
- questions of health at work and health control
- questions of work agreements, working time and wages
- vocational training
- social assurance including unemployment insurance and unemployment subsidies
- improvement of working conditions

These matters are generally handled by offices and authorities of the branches in question. The workers' organizations consequently have to deal with several offices and authorities. This presupposes a sufficient degree of activity by these organizations. Thus, the amount of members also affect the executive capacity of the organization.

25. Other Activities

The social status of the forest worker can be improved also by measures connected with the appreciation of forest work. In addition, especially in some East-European countries attention is being paid to the motivation of forest workers. In forest districts daily norms and work results by named groups of workers are pinned on the walls of the cultural house

of the village. Photos of the best workers are publicly displayed on boards of honour. Wages and taxation also favour big work outputs. Appreciation of the workers with the best working records is shown in the form of public praise, remunerations, and special holiday arrangements.

Various kinds of publicity is also exercised in order to raise the appreciation of forest work. For instance in the USA, logging skill competitions have already for many decades collected large amounts of spectators. In Finland, several logging work competitions were arranged in the 1940's. In the early

1960's competitions in skill when using power saws have been arranged.

In 1970 at the initiative of Hungary, power saw competitions were made international. After that 7 international competitions have been arranged in different countries. The latest of these was held in Finland in autumn 1977, while the following one will be in Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1978. Publicity to competitions of this kind has been given in the information media and has aroused interest among public. These competitions also help to raise the appreciation of the forest work.

3. IMPROVEMENT OF THE POSITION OF FOREST WORKERS

Comparisons on the development within the wages of forest workers can be made on the basis of the Folia Forestalia No. 175¹⁾ published by the Finnish Forest Research Institute. According to it as from the 1920's the real daily earnings among forest workers in Sweden increased on an average by 2.8 % a year, between 1922 and 1970 the increase was 5.8 fold. In Norway, the real net earnings per year of forest workers increased by 52 % from 1962 to 1971, the annual real growth being 4.8 %. In Finland, the rise in real earnings per day has been faster than in the above countries. Nevertheless, according to an investigation in 1970 the earnings per year were in Norway 32 % and in Sweden 73 % higher than the annual earnings of the permanent forest workers employed by the State Board of Forestry in Finland.

After the study mentioned above, the differences may have changed in favour of Finland. Compared to other occupations, the wages in forest work in Scandinavian countries have reached or even exceeded the level of daily or hourly earnings in the metal industry and are well on the way to attain this level also in regard to the annual earnings of permanent workers.

¹⁾ HEIKINHEIMO, LAURI — HEIKINHEIMO, MATTI — REUNALA, AARNE 1973: Earnings of Forest Workers in Scandinavia, especially in Finland. Folia Forestalia 175, Helsinki.

The position of forest workers has been mainly influenced by agreements on terms and conditions of work concluded by the labour market organizations. These agreements are often very detailed in character covering in Finland points such as freedom of organization, contract making, terminating of work contracts, working time, size and payment of wages, safety at work, accident and sickness benefits, group insurance, annual leave, compensation for transport, directions at work sites, appointed workers' representatives, settlement of disagreements, and order of negotiations, as well as working peace. Thanks to this negotiation system the trade union organizations are able to negotiate and to improve matters connected with their position.

Matters related to the standard of living have been discussed above in Chapter 14. It seems a fact that in many countries the standard of living among forest workers has been and still is lower than in many other occupations. However, the increasing degree of permanent forest work has contributed to an improvement in the situation. Housing and food have improved, the forest workers' health control has come within the scope of legislation or has been otherwise agreed. The strain of the forest work has diminished, safety at work has increased etc. The occupation of a forest worker is becoming comparable to many other occupations. Still there is much

scope for improvement. A number of investigations have been carried out in the field. One of those may be mentioned here.²⁾

While the position of forest workers has improved and developed when comparing to other occupations their position has also changed in regard to work supervisors. As a result of a loyal wage policy the workers' level of earnings has risen more than that of the work supervisors. Relations have changed also through the workers becoming organized. Now the workers receive their information through organizations of their own while previously it was given mainly through work supervision channels. Infor-

mation from the employer may in fact reach the workers through their appointed representatives sooner than through work supervisors.

Progress is going to follow along the same lines of development that exist elsewhere in society. Therefore, it appears highly probable that the position of the forest worker will be further solidified. Improvement in working conditions, participation in the planning of the work and within forest economy as well as formation of self-controlling work groups, and new working methods and organizations are going to be among the main objectives.

SELOSTE:

METSÄTYÖNTEKIJÄIN SOSIAALINEN KEHITTÄMINEN — TYÖNTEKIJÄJÄRJESTÖJEN OSUUS

Metsätalouden alkutuotantoon osallistuvan metsätyöntekijän työnsaantimahdollisuudet riippuvat metsästä saatavien tuotteiden kysynnästä sekä kysynnän ja tarjonnan keskinäisistä suhteista, kuten myös kausi- ja suhdannevaihteluista sekä puun kysynnän kehityksestä.

Metsätalouden tuotannon määrän ja sen vaihteluiden ohella työn tarjontaan vaikuttaa metsätyöpanoksen tarve. Se riippuu tuotannon rakenteen ja työn tuottavuuden kehityksestä. Monissa metsätalousmaissa on siirretty työtä metsästä keskitettyihin puunkäsittelypaikkoihin tai tehtaisiin sekä siirretty useimpien työvaiheiden koneellistamiseen ja kausityövoimasta kohti ammattimaista metsätyöntekijäkuntaa. Kun koneellistamisen taloudellisuus riippuu suuresti ihmis- ja konetyön keskinäisistä hintasuhteista, vaihtelee taloudellisesti edullisin koneellistamistaso eri maissa. Monissa maissa voimakas koneellistaminen on pienentänyt metsätyövoiman määrää tuotannon kasvusta huolimatta.

Tämäntapainen kehitys jatkuu edelleen. Metsätyövoiman tarpeen pienentyessä metsätöihin jää-

vän metsätyövoiman rakenne muuttuu entistä vakinaisemmaksi. Vakinaisuus takaa metsätyöntekijälle paremman tulotason ja luo edellytykset perheen elämän ja elinehtojen suunnitelmalliseen järjestelyyn. Tulotason turvaamiseen liittyvät myös eläkeikäraja ja eläkkeen saannin turvaaminen, ammattikoulutus, työterveys ja eräät muut tekijät.

Tulotaso- ja elintasotekijöiden korkeus vaikuttaa metsätyön ja metsätyöntekijän osakseen saamaan arvostukseen. Sen lisääntymiseen vaikuttavat edelleen tapahtuva koneellistaminen, ammattikoulutus, paraneva palkkaus, kilpailu työvoimasta sekä ruumiillisen työn ja ammattitaidon lisääntyvä arvostus.

Voidakseen vaikuttaa ammattinsa harjoittamisen edellytyksiin ja siitä ammattikunnalle saatavaan hyötyyn metsätyöntekijät ovat järjestäytyneet ammattiyhdistyksiin ja ammattiliittoihin. Metsäammattissa toimivat ovat enemmän hajallaan kuin asutuskeskusten väki, mikä vaikeuttaa metsätyöväen järjestäytymistä. Kuitenkin esimerkiksi Pohjoismaissa vanhimmat maa- ja metsäalan työntekijäliitot on perustettu yli 50 vuotta sitten.

Liitot pyrkivät koulutuksen ja muun toiminnan avulla aktivoimaan jäsenistöään edistämään liiton päämäärien saavuttamista. Ne pyrkivät luomaan jäsenistölle valmiuksia osallistua ja valvoa liiton toimintaa sekä tehostamaan liittonsa toiminta-

²⁾ HEIKINHEIMO, LAURI — HEIKINHEIMO, MATTI — LEHTINEN, MARTTI — REUNALA, AARNE 1974. Level of Living of Forest Workers in Finland. Communicationes Instituti Forestalia Fenniae 81.1, Helsinki.

muotoja ja -menetelmiä. Tässä mielessä suoritetaan jäsenkoulutusta, työpaikkojen luottamushenkilöiden koulutusta sekä toimitsajakoulutusta. Jäsenistön vaikeuksia pyritään lieventämään mm. työttömyyskassatoiminnan avulla. Kansainvälinen yhteistyö on myös eräs toimintamuoto.

Pyrkinessään vaikuttamaan työvoimapolitiikkaan ja metsätalouspolitiikkaan työntekijäjärjestöt ovat läheisessä yhteistyössä ensi sijassa omikseen katsomiensa poliittisten puolueiden kanssa. Tässä toiminnassa ovat keskeisiä asioita työvoiman tarjonta ja kysyntä, työvoiman rekrytointi ja koulutus, palkkaus- ja työsuhdeasiat, työturvallisuuskysymykset, sosiaalikysymykset asuntoasioineen, rationalisointi- ja koneellistamiskysymykset sekä metsätöiden arvostukseen liittyvät asiat.

Työnantajajärjestöjen kanssa käytävissä keskusteluissa työvoimapolitiittiset kysymykset, palkkaus, työehtosopimusten noudattamisen valvonta, työsuojelu, asuntoasiat yms. ovat keskeisiä. Palkkausmenetelmien, palkkausperusteiden ja palkka-

tason sekä työmenetelmien ja rationalisointiin liittyvien seikkojen edellyttäessä tutkimustoimintaa joutuvat työntekijäjärjestöt olemaan kosketuksissa myös tutkimustoimintaan.

Metsätyöntekijäjärjestön yhteyksissä julkisen hallinnon viranomaisiin käsiteltäviksi tulevat työturvallisuus ja tapaturmantorjunta, työterveyskysymykset ja terveydenhoito, työsuhde-, työaika- ja palkkauskysymykset, ammattikoulutus, sosiaalivakuutukset ja työolosuhteiden parantaminen.

Varsinkin eräissä Itä-Euroopan maissa työn motivointiin kiinnitetään suurta huomiota. Palkkaus ja verotus on järjestetty suurta tuottavuutta suosivaksi. Parhaisiin työtuloksiin päässeille annetaan tunnustuksia kunnianosoitusten, rahasuoritusten ja lomajärjestelyjen avulla. Tähän liittyvät muut metsätöiden arvostusta lisäävät toimenpiteet, mm. kansainväliset moottorisahausmestaruuskilpailut, joiden järjestämiseen myös työntekijäjärjestöt vaikuttavat.