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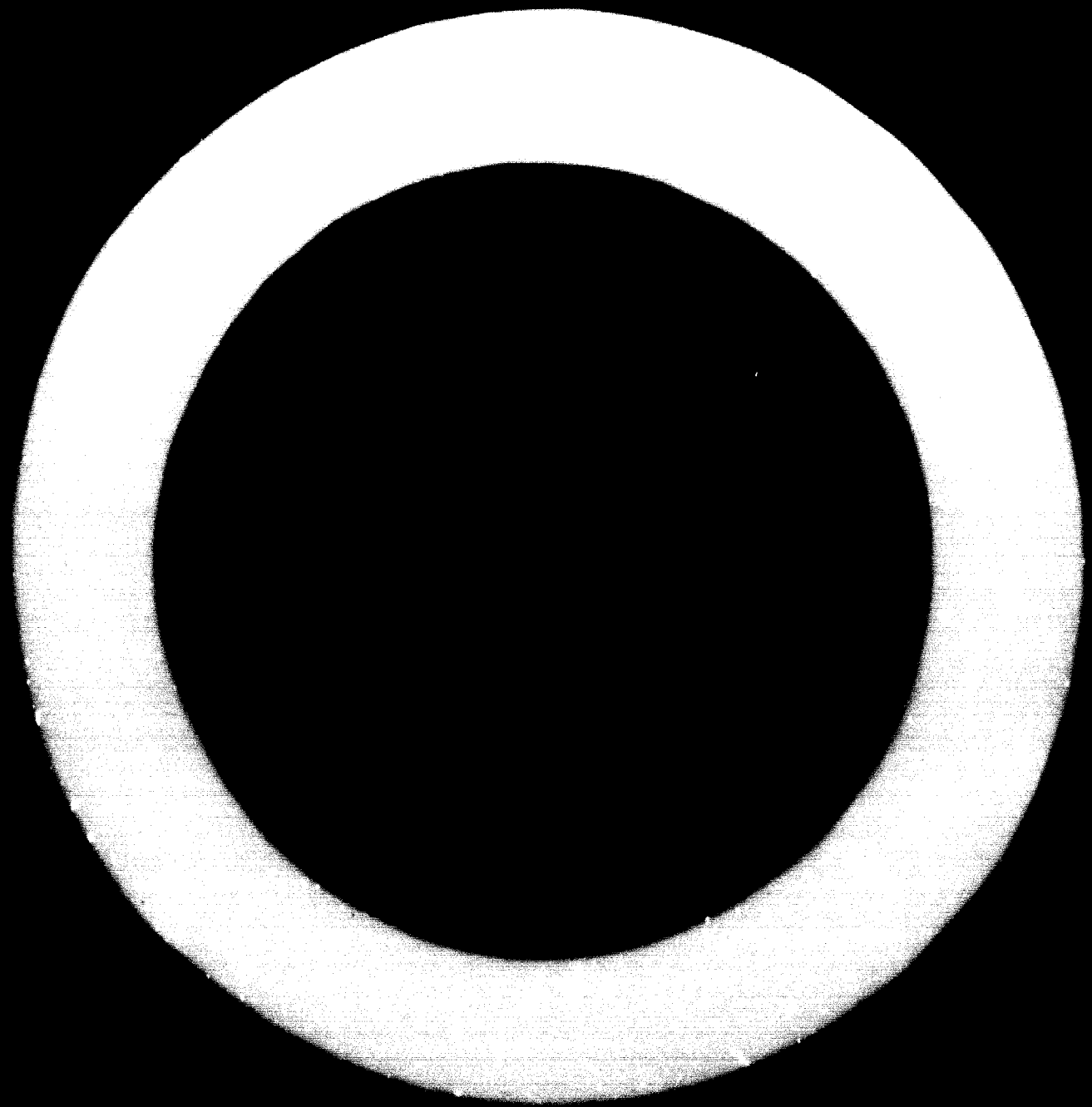
THE CURRENT FURNITURE AND SECONDARY WOOD PROCESSING
INDUSTRY IN CAMEROON

Country paper
by
J.N. Minang
Managing Director
Modern Furniture Co. Ltd.
Victoria, Cameroon

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We regret that some of the pages in the microfiche copy of this report may not be up to the proper legibility standards, even though the best possible copy was used for preparing the master fiche.



The Cameroon is still quite rich of timber. The forest area in Cameroon is about four hundred (400) square miles. The rest of the place is covered with grass.

The timbers are either extracted by the natives or foreign investors. The Cameroonian uses wood in several ways, mainly for furniture, building, sea vessels, carvings and as a firewood. He starts the job from timber conversion and up till now most people still do a lot of pit sawing. We, however, are moving to saw milling as there are already about thirty saw mills growing.

Having sawn them the next step is to market them, to furniture factories, petty wood workers, builders etc. The use of wood is a very big occupation as most people easily employ themselves behind their houses making some form of furniture in order to earn a living. Some make a fortune from carving, others make canoes.

The furniture standard in Cameroon has not met international standard yet as nearly 60% of furniture used is still produced behind houses by individuals poorly equipped both in the technical know how and in machinery and capital. These lead to poor products and strenuous labour. In a forest country like ours we still import furniture instead of exporting.

Our carvers are more successful because they attract foreign exchange from tourists who like their work and can pay enough for their labour.

Most Cameroonians build with wood so that in most villages only very few people build concrete houses, they also extend to bridges in a way. Our fishermen make canoes and also run transport in the sea.

Timber exportation gives our Government a good amount of money, and it provides employment to people. We grow Mahogany, Iroko, Walnut, Mansonia, Ebony, Campwood, Zebreno and many others. Total export tonnage a year is 11,391,812 tons.

Other timber products are still not being done, only a small plywood industry which started producing only about nine months ago is developing near Yaounde the capital. We largely depend on imported plywood, veneer, hardboard and paper.

There are three Government Technical Colleges in the country where wood-work is taught and a higher school has been opened in Yaounde under assistance provided by UNDP/FAO. Our designs to a large extent remain copy work in the true field of furniture, but our carvers are doing a type of furniture which is of our origin.

I think UNIDO can help in many ways as we have plenty of wood and we do not yet use it to a maximum standard in any aspect. We definitely need to use wood which has in abundance from leaves in the roots without waste. A possible start could be to build an integrated saw mill complex with a plywood and a block board mill. A fibreboard factory could be added at a later date.

These would not only enable us to use our wood well but will also reduce our unemployment problem.



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