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Seminar on Furniture and Joinery Industries

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**THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN CYPRUS\***

by

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The present number of individual units manufacturing furniture on the island is about 70. The labour force is currently approximately 2000 and the value of gross production in 1974 was US\$8.6 million. Exports in 1974 was US\$70,000 and imports for the same period was US\$1.7 million. The local demand for furniture has fallen due to the economic situation in the country which after the events of 1974 resulted in a lowering of the standard of living. The value of gross production fell from US\$12.7 million in 1973 to US\$8.6 million in 1974. Opinion would suggest however that there are good prospects for the export of furniture particularly of the "Knock-Down" modular variety, primarily due to the cheap cost of labour in Cyprus and cheap freight rates from Cyprus to the Near and Middle East, North and East Africa and Europe. In order to economically exploit this situation, it is considered necessary to provide better furniture design and improved techniques of production. It will also be necessary to up grade present skills and the methodology of production to meet the requirements of these markets.

The climate of Cyprus is dry in summer and mild in winter. The temperature ranges from 9°C or 47°F in December (average minimum) to 35°C or 96°F in August (average maximum). The relative humidity at 08.00 hrs ranges from 50% to 83% and at 14.00 hrs, it ranges from 28% to 63%.

Before 1974, the area of Cyprus forests was 669.34 square miles which represents the 18.74% of total land area.

In July 1974, during the Turkish invasion in Cyprus, the Turkish air force bombed with incendiary bombs our forests simultaneously at various points. About 30% or about 100 square miles of the productive forests of Cyprus were burnt down. Also 24.1% of the Cyprus forests, including the whole of the Northern Range have been occupied by the invaders.

The Cyprus Forests Industries provide the furniture industry only with pine wood, particle board and veneered particle board.

All the other materials for the furniture industry are imported.

All the companies express the opinion that they find difficulty in recruiting additional skilled furniture workers. This is due to the fact that the skilled furniture maker is attracted to the construction industry as joiners and carpenters by reason of the higher hourly rate.

The number of trained apprentices that leave the technical schools each year are considered by the manufacturers to be of an excellent standard, but these individuals on leaving are immediately directed to their military service and subsequent to this are lost to the furniture industry. The apprentice who returns to the furniture industry on completion of his military service will only obtain a small weekly wage which will continue for a number of years until he is considered proficient by his employer in all the areas of the furniture production processes. As these youths can obtain a larger weekly wage from other activities and industries, they are reluctant to return to a furniture factory.

The range of furniture products manufactured by each of the companies is very large.

All the companies are manufacturing their furniture products by jobbing shop production and these products are manufactured to a high external visual standard. However, the majority of these products are mostly copied from illustrations in catalogues or magazines of various European countries. The skill of the factory personnel is reflected in the success with which they have been able to do this. However, what cannot be seen cannot be copied thus the internal structure and details of these items of furniture leaves much to be desired and detracts from consumer value of the product. Basic technical design information and guidance is required to rectify this situation. Because the companies cannot define the internal structure and details of the items of furniture, it is wrong to suggest a deficiency in basic furniture technology possessed by their staff.

The machinery and equipment that exists at present in the companies leave much to be desired. The majority of this equipment has been purchased on the consideration of purchase price only, with the result

that they are only capable of a limited range of operations and are not flexible or adaptable enough to accommodate the large number of other operations normally carried out on similar machines. Most of the companies have an odd collection of woodworking machines of such variety that it is difficult to determine on what basic process the selection was made. There is a definite need for guidance to be given on the selection, evaluation and purchase of machines and equipment as much of the present plant and equipment in the companies investigated reduces the effectiveness of these companies.

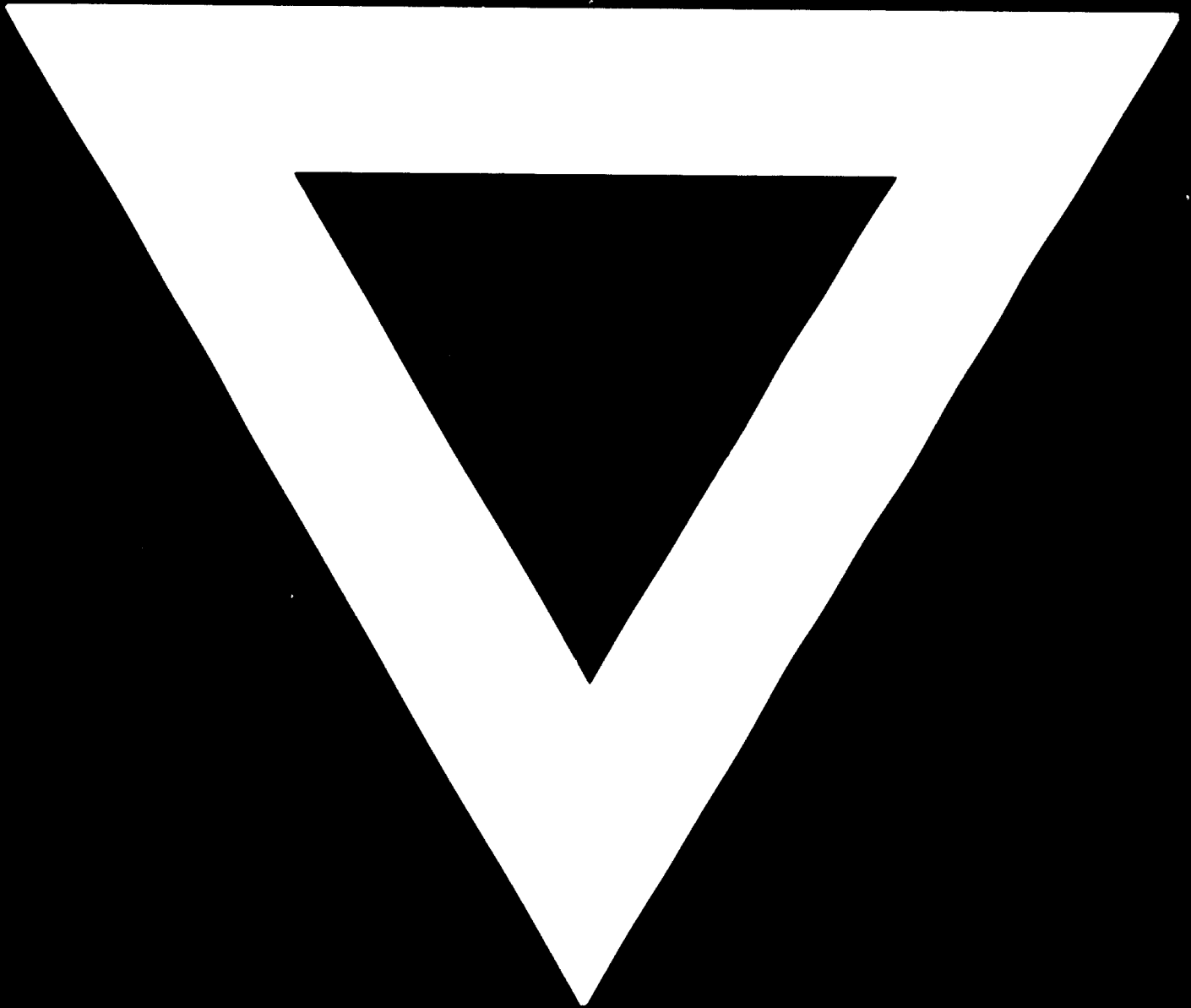
Also the maintenance of saws and cutters is poor and most of the companies have little or no equipment for this. What equipment they have for this purpose is so antiquated and inaccurate as to be virtually of little use. Most of the companies send their tools out for maintenance but the effectiveness of this maintenance is questionable and its poor quality is reflected in the quality of the machining.

The majority of the companies have considerable inventories of finished products, but they all have their own retail business which enabled them to carry the large stock.

Making allowances for the quality of the present product costing, the ex-factory cost of furniture would indicate that these costs are well below those of comparable products in some other countries (e.g. U.K.). In addition, the quality of some items could reach the acceptable standards for export markets provided that "Home assembly" principles or "Knock Down" fittings are incorporated into these products. However, attention will have to be paid to the visual design of the product as this is considered important in these markets. It naturally follows therefore, that careful consideration should be given to the acceptable quality of the surface finish and the fittings.



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