

WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE
PRODUCTIVE
AND ARTISANAL SOCIETIES

in the
JOINERY
and
**WOODWORKING
INDUSTRIES**

in
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
FRANCE
ISRAEL
ITALY
SWEDEN

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE

*Auxiliary Committee
of
Workers' Co-operative Productive
and Artisanal Societies*

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International Co-operative Alliance,
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Borgo Santo Spirito 78,
ROME. Italy.

1961

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C Z E C H O S L O V A K I A

The production of Furniture-Making Co-operatives in Czechoslovakia has been concentrated in the past few years mostly on a series production of furniture for State and co-operative trade, only a smaller part of their capacity being devoted to the production to order of furniture for the population and supplies of furniture and other furnishing equipment to various institutions.

The ever increasing volume of residential construction and requirements of the widest circles of population in new types of furniture and interior decoration, called forth by the continuously increasing standard of living, have resulted in a continuous increase in the volume of furniture production in the respective production co-operatives, intended for meeting the demands of State and co-operative trade, and in a corresponding decrease of production to order for the population and various other institutions.

To attain the greatest possible identity of prices of identical or similar products produced by the co-operatives and by the State wood-working industry, the chief interest of production co-operatives lay in limitation of their production programme to the minimum and the greatest possible exclusion of its changes. A limited production programme does not impose great requirements upon the preparation of production, contrary to the production of small lots combined with frequent changes of assortment or to the production of individual pieces of furniture to order.

This tendency was necessary from the economic point of view, as it was imperative to eliminate, within the shortest possible period of time, all disproportions between production and demand called forth by the Second World War and the post war reorganisation of the whole of the Czechoslovak national economy.

With the gradual increase of capacity of the State furniture-making industry a new task has arisen for the production co-operatives, viz., in the first place, work according to orders and the ensuring of repair and maintenance services to the population and, in the second place, the production of various non-standard types of furniture for various industrial and commercial corporations and various communal institutions, such as schools, kindergartens, crèches, hotels, restaurants, recreation centres, etc.

At the end of the year 1957 the quota of production to order was about 10% of the whole volume of production, the percentage of the repairs for the population amounting to about 1.5%. In the course of the past two years, however, the volume of production to order grew to 46%, the percentage of repairs carried out for the population having almost doubled.

The trend of development of the structure of the production of the Furniture-making Co-operatives will show another increase of the volume of production to order as, in accordance with the results of nation-wide investigations, the needs of the population are much higher and their satisfaction will be the task of the Co-operatives.

The task of supplying the market with a constantly increasing quantity of ever more up-to-date products is coming ever further to the fore also in connection with the enormous extent of residential construction planned for the next few years, during which the whole housing shortage in Czechoslovakia will be eliminated and 1,200,000 flats built by the end of the year 1970. Simultaneously with this construction programme also an increase of the production of furniture and furnishing items is envisaged. It is obvious that this increase of supplies of furniture to the home market will be covered chiefly by the mass producing furniture plants of the state wood-working industry. However, it cannot be presumed that the demand of the population will be limited only to items of the series production programme of industrial corporations. The ever increasing rise of the standard of living of the population will result also in an increase of the requirements imposed on the standard of the individual styles of furnishing of the home, either as a whole, or in the form of individual complements and various variations of standard furnishing schemes. It will be up to the Production Co-operatives to meet also these requirements.

Apart from production to order, the Co-operatives will have to ensure, at an increased rate, modernisation of existing furniture which is very much demanded by the population. Another task will consist in the individual production of furnishing equipment for various corporations and institutions. With the gradual extension of the communal and cultural services to the population also, the necessity of ensuring current and general repairs of furnishing and interior decorating equipment of these establishments will increase.

By the year 1965 the increase of production will show a strong tendency towards production to order for the population, which will have increased by 71%, repairs and maintenance work for the population, which will have increased by 117%, while the same services for the socialist sector of the national economy will have increased only by 43%. Basic changes in the economic goals of the production will be carried out in the course of the following three Five-Year Plans up till the year 1980.

With regard to the planned continuous shortening of working hours it is necessary to create, right at the present time, technical and organisational prerequisites for the future enabling us to meet the requirements of continuous growth of production on the basis of increased productivity of labour, in spite of the fact that the character of the production will change from series production to production based on the individual wishes of customers.

If we want to increase the productivity of production to order and reduce the prices of its products at the same time, we must create the necessary prerequisites in a wide network of sample rooms and centres for the taking of orders in which the widest assortment of our products will be offered at the lowest possible price. It will no longer be possible to carry out production to order on an individual basis; it will be necessary to put it on an industrial basis, i.e. produce in small lots.

One of the further principal tasks of the Furniture-making Production Co-operatives is, and will continue to be also in the future, as I have already mentioned, the production of furnishing and interior decorations items for other corporations and institutions. In connection with this task also the needs of other Production Co-operatives are ensured. The Furniture-making Production Co-operatives produce shop furniture, equipment for fashion houses, sample rooms and sales rooms of Co-operatives, co-operative service centres, department stores and workshops.

As a result of the reorganisation of production and its transition from series production to small lot and individual production and, naturally, also the necessity of continuous growth of the productivity and economy of the production, consistent adherence to standards will be necessary also in the determination and realisation of further technical development of the co-operative furniture production.

Constant reduction of the consumption of natural wood and continuously increasing utilisation of new materials on the basis of plastics, metals and foam materials on one hand, and on that of agglomerated wood on the other hand, as well as the constantly increasing quota of production to order in the total volume of furniture production will result in greater demand for designers, development workers and structural designers in the individual Co-operatives. Without these workers it is not possible to imagine any growth of production to order and increase of its technical standard during its preparation, which is the basis of the production.

For this reason the principal tasks in technical development in the wood-working branch is the creation of material and technological prerequisites for the intended changes of production. The individual Co-operatives are building central plants provided with modern machinery and other equipment, adjoining stores of materials and drying plants. These central works are built, in the first place, by means of reconstructing existing workshops. In the preparation of the plan of technical development great attention must, therefore, be paid to the location of other workshops in the respective territory, as they will be connected, with regard to their operation, with the central plant. The location of this key centre of production must, therefore, be afforded great and painstaking consideration.

Principally the Furniture-Making Production Co-operative will be organised in two ways. In those whose activities cover a large area which includes a number of country towns and a large countryside area, the organisation will be focused on the construction of a central plant for the mechanised preparation of semi-products which will be utilised in territorially dispersed assembly workshops. In Co-operatives with a smaller radius of action, i.e. those situated in large towns, the technical development and organisation of production will be concentrated on the construction of the central plant in which all production operations will be carried out, i.e. also the assembly of the products and their finishing. This central plant will be supplemented by a number of sample room and centres for the taking of orders. In this case, only small workshops for the repair and maintenance services will be located elsewhere.

In the equipping of big central workshops with machinery, the technical authorities of the Co-operatives must consider responsibly the possibilities of utilisation of already existing up-to-date machines owned by the Co-operative, yet still in the individual small-size workshops, in which their capacity cannot be fully utilised. The machinery will include not only the principal types of modern wood-working machines, such as circular, cross-cut and band saws, thickness and surface planers, mortisers, moulders and sanders, but also special equipment for the working of plastics and other new materials. To improve the mechanisation and technology of production, it will be necessary to supplement this machinery with hydraulic presses, roll sanders, modern spraying chambers or, provided their large scale utilisation, high efficiency varnish sprayers, further machinery for mechanisation of the preparation of veneers, edge finishing, polishing, assembly frames, etc.

In the central works with a high degree of mechanisation the whole process of preparation of semi-products will be carried out on industrial lines, beginning with cutting of wood to the necessary sizes, over glueing, fitting to veneers, veneering, sanding, varnishing and polishing, to the final finishing of the individual parts in readiness for assembly.

The final assembly of these semi-products, which will require only a small amount of manual work, can then be carried out either in smaller existing workshops specialised either in accordance with the skill of their workers or in accordance with the auxiliary equipment, among which generally a minimum of mechanised means will be required. Thus in its final phase production to order will again be brought as near the customer as possible, similarly as in the central works of Co-operatives situated in large towns.

On similar lines also the co-operative production of parts supplementing the final products, such as upholstery, production of the necessary hardware, etc, will be organised. These problems must always be solved in accordance with local conditions. In places where these supplementary workshops cannot be economically established directly within the framework of the Furniture-making Production Co-operative, mutual co-operation will be ensured by means of contracts with Co-operatives of the respective branch of production, which will possibly cover the needs of all Wood-working Co-operatives.

After the setting-up of central plants producing centrally semi-products for the furniture production, all existing workshops situated in the courtyards of, or directly in residential buildings will be gradually abolished. Only in cases in which they will have to be preserved in order to ensure the optimum functioning of the network of Furniture Production Co-operatives will they be left in operation, their activities, however, being limited to repair and maintenance work or the execution of smaller orders requiring a larger extent of manual work. In the programme of renovation of machinery such workshops will be equipped with combined multi-purpose machines, such as combined thicknesses, surface planer, moulder, drill and saw, etc., and supplementary combined sanders and polishers.

Apart from machinery all small and large workshops alike need small-size equipment to mechanise certain manual operations. These include hand circular saws, sanders, floor sanders, simple jigs and fixtures, assembly carriage and multi-purpose assembly frames, electric heating equipment, protective guards for machines combined with feeding attachments, electrically heated plates for hand presses, machines for the finishing of edges, stuffing and raveling machines, etc. In the field of the so-called "small mechanisation" we are fostering in a continuously increasing extent the movement of rationalisers and innovators among the members of our Co-operatives.

In the general propagation of these improvements and new methods of organisation of work, as well as the introduction of new technological processes and experience into production are carried out in an ever greater extent during the so-called "Days of New Technique", in which good experience and technical novelties are handed over to the workers of other workshops or other production co-operatives for introduction and propagation.

To ensure the production of good novelties in the field of small mechanisation of national importance one Co-operative, excellently equipped technically and mechanically, has been entrusted with the task of ensuring the production of these mechanisms and supplying them to all Wood-working Co-operatives. In a similar way also the problem of workshops for general repairs of machinery and production of tools for wood-working machines has been solved.

Technical problems common to all Wood-working Co-operatives are solved by means of so-called Thematic Tasks for Improvers and Innovators, as well as by means of technical and scientific co-operation with other socialist countries.

Simultaneously with the continuously increasing modernisation of machinery and specialisation of production in the individual workshops, multiple shift operation will gradually be introduced, particularly in the central works, which will improve the value of the index of utilisation of machinery. By means of scrapping of old machines, modernisation of machinery in general and concentration of new machinery in central works, the ratio of basic means of production to the value of production will increase.

Another important task of Furniture-making Co-operatives is extension of the optimum network of workshops and centres for the taking of orders to ensure repairs for the population. In the programme of extension of our services attention is concentrated chiefly on newly built housing estates. In other central communities similar handicraft branches will be concentrated into common centres to ensure complete services for the population. In the wood-working branch these centres will include chiefly joiners, upholsterers, glaziers, parquet flooring specialists and interior decorators.

With regard to the formerly existing production programme of the Wood-working Co-operatives, viz. small lot production and work for the state and co-operative sales organisations, the problem of contact with the individual customer was not afforded the necessary attention. In connection with re-orientation of their activities towards production to order for individual customers a network of sample rooms is gradually being built up. For production to order it is necessary to build the network of sample rooms in such a way as to ensure that in places with a large number of population or in places where a large number of population concentrates there be at least one, or possibly more, sample rooms.

The fulfilment of this requirement is very important, because it will be the sample rooms which will serve the best utilisation of our production capacity. They will have to be adequately equipped, furnished and decorated, their exhibited samples will have to change frequently, and they will have to be provided with ample documentary material which will afford the customer a general idea of the production and assortment possibilities of the respective Co-operative.

The sample rooms will have to be provided with a permanent or alternating consulting staff with working hours adjusted to the needs of the wide circles of the population. This service will ensure, in the first place, personal contact with the customer, will guide him in the matters of taste and will assist him with advice in the equipping of his home not only with furniture, but also with supplementary details, such as ceramics, carpets, curtains, flowers, etc.

The Institute of Development and Design, an institution sponsored by the Central Council of Production Co-operatives, is also participating in the technical development of the Co-operatives, above all by means of preparing the necessary design documentation for the construction of new workshops. The Institute also concentrates the designs of various types of furniture developed by the individual Co-operatives and propagates the good types among other Co-operatives.

To foster industrialisation of production to order and to ensure a bigger demand for one type of furniture, mutual exchange of types among several Co-operatives of the same region will be organised. Orders for these types secured in the sample rooms of the individual Co-operatives will be handed over to the Co-operative producing the respective type, this procedure contributing considerably not only to greater possibilities of industrialisation of production, but also to extension of the radius of activity of the individual Co-operatives. Some Co-operatives have already gained good experience with this type of mutual co-operation which will be introduced generally among the Wood-working Co-operatives.

The problems of technical development are closely connected with the problem of utilisation of new materials. In accordance with the general world trend of development the Wood-working Co-operatives, whose volume of production is continuously increasing, are concentrating their attention on economy of natural wood and its replacement with plastics, agglomerated wood, metals, glass laminates, surfacing

malamine foils, latex and polyester coats, etc. In making use of these materials the Wood-working Co-operatives are utilising national standardisation of some parts made of fibreboards and plastics. These parts include particularly the series of drawers of standardised shapes and sizes, further some completely finished parts, such as doors and shelves, and some supplementary parts of cabinet-type furniture.

To extend the material basis of all furniture-making Co-operatives in Czechoslovakia, a Co-operative has been founded whose sole and primary task is the production of certain parts of furniture. At present this Co-operative produces structural boards of Sololit hard fibreboards with a honeycomb core which are used primarily for the production of bodies and doors of painted furniture, and for the upper boards of kitchen furniture. Boards used for the latter purpose are provided with a surface consisting of Umacard coloured plastic foil, their edges being finished with PVC strips. Both of these operations are carried out in the workshop of the producer, so that the other Co-operatives obtain finished semi-products ready for assembly. For the needs of Wood-working Co-operatives the above-mentioned specialised Co-operative produces further battenboard parts cut to the necessary sizes, front doors for lats in the production of which rubber foil produced from old tyres is used under the trade name of JIKO boards. From these boards also folding packing boxes for bag-making, toy-making and glass-making Co-operatives will be produced.

To ensure further extension of the raw material basis of the Co-operatives this year the production of fibreboards of waste wood will be organised. Also planned in the future is the production of laminated moulded shelves of veneers and subveneers.

To assist further the Furniture-making Production Co-operatives in their task of increasing the effectiveness of production to order, standardisation of principal parts of furniture, such as table boards, doors, shelves and drawers, will be carried out in co-operation with the technicians of the individual Production Co-operatives. Every part will be standardised in several series of shapes and sizes which will enable the application of standardised parts also in production to order. This will also create prerequisites for these principal semi-products to be provided with definite paint or veneer finish as early as in the workshop of their producer.

Another measure assisting the Furniture-making Co-operatives is the introduction of production in two Co-operatives of cut chair skeletons which can be then provided with various upholstery in other Co-operatives. This procedure will not only extend the assortment of seating furniture produced by the state industrial corporations, but will also eliminate costly individual production of these skeletons, hitherto dispersed in many Co-operatives. Its concentration into works of a high standard of technical and mechanical equipment will ensure a considerable reduction of the costs of production of these semi-products.

In the framework of co-operation among the individual Production Co-operatives and in the interest of extension of the use of new materials in the production of furniture and consequent economy of natural wood, also the production of some parts of furniture made of plastics, will be carried out within the framework of the co-operative activities. By the end of this year a proposal regarding the specialisation of Co-operatives concerned with the branch of plastics will be drawn up which will enable also inclusion of the production of these prefabricated semi-products into their production programme. For the time being this production will include the standardised series of drawers made of plastics and laminates.

The ever increasing use of new materials and agglomerated wood is naturally connected with the requirements imposed upon their working and consequently upon the quality of the tools used for it. A higher quality of the cutting edge of the tool necessarily imposes in turn higher requirements upon grinders and abrasives, the purchase of which involves considerable expense. For this reason the problem is solved through the co-operation of several Co-operatives by means of the organisation of tool-sharpening centres in which tools are sharpened in a minimum period of time by highly skilled workers and on machines which are thus fully utilised.

The increase of the standard of technical development, utilisation of new materials and extension of the volume of production to order will impose also considerable requirements on the qualification of the workers in the Co-operatives at all levels of the co-operative organisation.

The planned improvement of the qualification of the workers of the Production Co-operatives includes not only the training of apprentices and furthering of their education, but also a general increase and knowledge of all members of the Co-operatives by means of works, evening courses organised by lower grade and higher grade technical schools and correspondence courses organised by the same schools. The workers improve their qualifications by learning more than one trade, which is of great importance particularly in the field of repair and maintenance services.

With increasing requirements imposed upon culture of living, doubtlessly an increase of the requirements on the aesthetic and functional values of the furniture and interior decoration of homes can be expected in the very near future. For this reason also the problem of organising design centres in all Co-operatives has already been discussed. The size of these centres will depend directly on the volume of production to order of the individual Co-operatives. The centres will develop new types of products, which should be free of old-fashioned and out-dated ideas and elements both in their design and structure.

Apart from the development of new products the workers of these design centres will also ensure consulting services to customers and prepare technical data for the production including the necessary quantity surveys and estimates.

The centres will be methodically directed by the Institute of Development and Design which will see to it that the newly developed products are in accordance with the modern lines and shapes, that they are purposeful, that in their development only elements of a high artistic and functional value are used which are light in weight and balanced in shape, enabling thus maximum economy of natural wood and maximum utilisation of new materials and standardised elements.

These are the principal tasks of the further trend of development of the furniture production in the Production Co-operatives in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the methods considered for their fulfilment.

F R A N C E

Workers' Productive and Artisanal Co-operative Societies in this sector form a vigorous and active group. Here they are studied under three heads:

- A. The use of wood in building.
- B. Other uses of wood.
- C. Artisanal Co-operatives.

A. The Use of Wood in Building.

In France, the enterprises concerned with woodwork for the construction of buildings are very numerous (54,000); generally small size (52,000 employ less than 5 wage-earners); scattered throughout the country.

In this group, Workers' Productive and Artisanal Carpentry and Joinery Co-operatives Societies, with an annual turnover of 4.65 milliards old francs, occupy a relatively important position (averaging 32 employees per Society).

The geographical distribution of the Societies is -

Paris region	11 Societies
Western region	11 "
Central region	8 "
South-west region	3 "
South-east region	5 "
North-east region	1 "
Northern region	9 "

Total.. 48 Societies

1. Carpentry.

Generally speaking, few societies confine their activities to carpentry alone.

Of all building trades, carpentry undoubtedly has the oldest traditions and has guarded them jealously by the trade-guild system.

But this old craft has not remained rooted in its venerable traditions. Recently, systematic tests on a great many samples of wood and on structure and assembly models, have made it possible to define the technical characteristics of wood in relation to its nature and quality and to assess suitable uses for wood which would revive carpentry on a scientific basis.

These technical developments permit the most precise calculations to be made and the conception of constructive logical systems, and methods strictly adapted to the final aim to be achieved, thus ensuring the optimum use of material and the production of articles which are completely reliable although appearing extremely bold in design.

It is, therefore, possible to apply carpentry satisfactorily for economic roofings for current building purposes as well as for industrial buildings of great breadth without intermediary supports, exhibition halls, wide-spanned hangars, and the most varied forms of arches and domes.

In writing a similar report twenty years ago, we would not have predicted a successful future for the carpentry industry, but recent developments have completely changed its perspectives. This is important for Co-operation, because it adapts itself well to the traditional characteristics of the carpenter's temperament.

At present 28 Carpentry Co-operatives have a turnover of 2,800 million francs. But, since all carpenters are to a certain extent joiners, it is difficult to determine the actual carpentry activity.

2. Joinery.

Joinery, like carpentry, has always been an artisanal craft steeped in long-established traditions. For this reason, after attaining a very high standard of workmanship, it remained static for centuries, clinging to a number of well-tried methods and, in the eyes of many architects, appeared incapable of adapting itself to new building methods and current technical and economic demands.

But after this long period of stagnation and several years of vigorous competition from metalwork, joinery has made a good recovery, and has been completely transformed and highly industrialised.

The standardisation policy pursued in recent years has greatly facilitated this change.

Joinery co-operatives in the building trade are thus rapidly abandoning their artisanal character to become truly industrial undertakings.

Our 20 joiners' Co-operatives have a turnover of about 2 milliard old francs. This figure is an approximate one, because for this section, as for the preceding one, there is never a distinct division between carpentry and joinery work.

B. Furniture-Making and Other Uses of Wood.

Many Co-operatives undertake woodwork, although their main activity may not be connected with the building industry.

Cabinet-making, furniture manufacture, turnery, etc., are, in fact, trades which are quite distinct from carpentry and joinery in the building industry, both as regards the professional qualifications required and the commercial methods of marketing the manufactured goods.

Sociologically, this distinction is evident in the professional habits and in the equally different geographical situation of these enterprises, one example being the traditional concentration of artisans and furniture dealers in the St. Antoine suburb of Paris.

Furniture manufacture is the exclusive or principal activity of a number of Workers' Productive Co-operatives; there are 20 of these with an average turnover of about 50 million old francs, employing an average of 30 persons. They are situated in large areas of consumption such as Paris, Limoges, etc., or in small traditional centres of the woodworking industry, such as Liffolle-Grand in the Vosges, St-Loup-sur-Semouse in Haute Saône, Millau in the Aveyron region, etc.).

Characteristic of these societies is the stability of their manpower, in direct contrast to the more rapid changeover of staff in joinery undertakings in the building industry. For the most part, they produce goods of very traditional design which are sold on the consumers' market through wholesalers and middlemen; they do not in fact have their own marketing system and are thus subject to the costs incurred by intermediaries.

However, other Societies have adapted their products to the changes in customers' tastes: one society makes furniture in units and for distribution purposes has formed a link with a group of decorative artists which has several selling points at its disposal in Paris and throughout France; another specialises in furnishing equipment for community purposes (schools, canteens, etc.,) and in kitchen furniture, making extensive use of plastic and laminated materials.

However, the use of these materials is the exception in our societies, for by putting new materials into production and using specialised tools, they require considerable changes in the professional qualifications of staff; the reconversion of furniture-making societies is therefore coupled with the necessity of not allowing certain jobs to become redundant where it would be difficult to redirect those who hold them.

In addition to the furniture-making co-operatives, some societies use wood for various other purposes -

In the St.Claude (Jura) region, there is a pipe manufacturing society which exports the greater part of its production abroad, and two societies specialising in turnery (light-fittings, toys and games, sailing equipment, etc.).

In Paris and Toulouse, three societies specialise in the manufacture of picture frames, one of which is one of the main European manufacturers of high quality frames and exports a large percentage of its production.

In the south-west, a society manufactures glider plane components and undertakes repairs of glider planes and light aircraft.

Almost everywhere in France, there are co-operative societies manufacturing packing cases, sticks, umbrella handles and various other articles such as wooden frames for jewel cases and caskets.

Finally, in the Vosges and Landes regions, there are two forestry and wood-cutting co-operatives, whose activity is on the border-line between agriculture and industry.

Although all these activities are fairly diverse and their only common denominator is the raw material used, they are grouped together in the statistics of the Confederation of Workers' Productive Co-operative Societies and the figure shown for the total turnover in the section "furniture and various other wooden articles" is 1.3 milliard old francs, with a total number of 900 persons employed.

This figure is increasing, although spasmodically, due to the fluctuations on the furniture market, but the number of staff employed remains steady, which, taking into account the stability of marketing prices and the drop in the market price of wood, is reflected in the progressive increase in productivity.

As regards future prospects, these are closely linked with the setting up by the Co-operatives of their own commercial network on the one hand and with the gradual introduction of new materials and processes on the other, which, as far as the Co-operatives are concerned, can only be introduced as staff is replaced to avoid too drastic a change in the range of jobs.

C. Artisanal Co-operatives.

A census of Artisanal Co-operative Societies in the woodworking trades is made difficult by the multifarious activities of most of these societies.

Thus, out of 47 Artisanal Co-operative Societies in the building industry who submit regular reports of their activities to the National Federation of Artisanal Co-operative Societies, more than two-thirds have a carpentry and joinery section, but it is linked with other sections, mostly with masonry, tiling and roofing. It is, therefore, impossible, with the information at present at our disposal, to determine the turnover of these societies in carpentry and joinery, or the number of staff employed for this work, but it should be mentioned that, in many cases, the amount of work carried out by some of them is considerable, (rebuilding, low-cost housing, school buildings, etc.).

As far as other uses of wood are concerned, and still with regard to the Artisanal Co-operatives which supply information to the National Federation, it is noteworthy that several societies make furniture, one producing turned articles in wood, another toys. These are small undertakings with a smaller staff than the artisanal co-operatives in the building industry, with the exception, however, of a furniture co-operative in Paris, which, from the point of view of production as well as that of marketing, is organised as an industrial enterprise.

Finally the existence of societies of artists rather than artisans should be mentioned, some of which, as in Marolles in the Loire et Cher for example, make extensive use of wood for artistic work and decorative objects for which there is a great demand.

Conclusion.

The future of woodworking societies seems to be infinitely brighter today than it was some years ago. New uses can be found for wood - a material available for thousands of years - and it can be perfectly adapted to the requirements of modern life.

Not very long ago, wood was only used in a very rudimentary fashion, in the form of sawnwood or heavy wood roughly tooled.

Today, however, it is possible to change its qualities at will and to subject its structure and properties to highly developed processes, in order to make it better suited to the uses for which it is required.

This applies not only to the use of wood in the building trade, but also in furniture, toys and industry in general.

The future of such a material is of great interest to the Workers' Productive and Artisanal Co-operative Societies. Indeed, this form of Co-operation has always been highly successful in the wood industries: because they require skilled labour, on the one hand; on the other, they do not require such large investments as other branches of modern industry.

It is for these reasons that, in France at least, it appears necessary for the woodworking societies to create for themselves a front-ranking position in co-operative expansion in future years.

I S R A E L

The number of Woodworking Co-operative Societies affiliated to the Union of Productive and Service Co-operative Societies at the beginning of 1961 was 17, with a working force of over 700, and own capital totalling £I. 723,000, (this being the figure in the balance sheets; the actual assets of the Co-operatives, according to their real value, are three to four times the book value). The proceeds of the 17 Co-operatives mentioned amounted to a total of £I. 9,000,000 in 1960, with a pay-roll of £I. 2,500,000, (wages).

There are 4 more co-operative undertakings, not affiliated to the Union, with 40 workers, and in addition to these 21 purely Artisanal Co-operatives, operating under their own steam, one has to take into account the innumerable Agricultural Societies, such as Kibutzim and Moshavim (collective and co-operative settlements) in practically every one of which there is a wood-working plant - some small, a few operating on a big scale - as well as the extensive wood-working industry operating within the general Histadruth framework (turn-over roughly £I. 39,000,000 in 1960).

The output of the Productive Co-operative Societies in 1960 totalled roughly £I. 8,500,000.

The oldest of the existing Societies is "Carmel" of Haifa, founded in 1919-42 years ago. It went through many ups and downs in this, which is, in contemporary Israeli history, a relatively long period. In 1948, the year of Israel's War of Independence, the Society almost caved in under the stress of war-time conditions, being located as it was in the fighting zone and exposed for several months to constant attacks on life and property. It managed, however, to just keep alive and, licking its wounds, it gradually recovered sufficiently to continue its normal existence. It will move shortly to a new, spacious, and properly equipped building.

The biggest of our Wood-working Societies is "Ha'argaz" (The Box). Established in 1932, it has had quite an interesting and, from various aspects, instructive history. It was founded by four members, with an original capital of only £40, for the production of citrus crates and vegetable boxes. One of the four members had been the owner of a private crate factory, which he turned over to the Co-operative when he joined it as a member, at the same time placing all his long business experience and know-how at the Society's disposal. The member elected to act as Manager had been formerly the Secretary of a Labour Council, with extensive public contacts to his credit, which proved a considerable asset in the efforts to gain a firm foothold in the wood-working line. The additional advantages of their honesty and good workmanship helped the members, in the course of time, to establish a name for themselves and affirm their position as a leading firm of manufacturers of wooden packaging produce.

Over the years the Society expanded in membership and in volume of production, so that in a comparatively short period it had to move three times to bigger premises, to meet the ever-growing needs in space and machinery, each time adding more buildings and better equipment, while extending the range of produce.

Inasmuch as citrus and vegetable crates are a seasonal item, the Society was faced with the problem of providing employment in off-seasons, and thus took up bus-body building (at first of wooden and later of metal construction) which, within a few years, became its staple industry, with citrus crates, carpentry, office furniture, and allied items taking second place.

This dynamic growth called for ever-increasing capital investment on the one hand, and, on the other hand, brought the co-operative and Histadruth bodies face to face with the need of increased public control and authority over the Society. To meet this need an agreement was reached under which the Co-operative Societies' Fund in consideration of a capital investment equalling the Society's own capital, assumed partnership rights, with a 50% vote, in the Ha'argaz enterprises. This agreement resulted in a company being set up in which Ha'argaz and the Co-operative Societies' Fund hold equal shares. It also resulted in the promotion of the Company's development and the expansion of its various lines. In its new form as a partnership with the Co-operative Societies' Fund, which in a broader sense means a partnership with Histadruth, Ha'argaz ventured into new and hitherto unexplored fields of activity. Combining with a company of private capitalists it went into the refrigerator manufacturing business ("Amcor" Refrigerators built under Philco patents), beginning with assembling of imported parts, and gradually going on to the manufacture of nearly all the individual components and the complete product. It is now the leading manufacturer of refrigerators in Israel, supplying the inland market and exporting to various foreign countries. Sister companies set up in the course of time are Amron (wireless sets) Amex (Enamel utensils), compressors, hardware, etc.

While, as may be seen from the foregoing, Ha'argaz ventured far into the metal-working field, its wood-working department has expanded, too, to keep pace with the country's growing requirements. A branch of the wood-working department has recently been opened in the development town of Ramleh, on a site of 10 hectares, with 13,000 square miles of building, for the manufacture of fruit and vegetable boxes, utility, hospital and school furniture, carpentry and the like. The up-to-date mechanical equipment which this plant boasts has enabled it to increase its output considerably. An expert brought from abroad is now busy improving the mechanical layout of the plant and expanding the company's manufacturing programme. New equipment for these developments is estimated at £I. 500,000.

The main problems of Ha'argaz, as a Co-operative Society and company alike, i.e., problems of primary importance to both the members of the Co-operative and the Board of the Co-operative Societies' Fund, are -

1. An ever-increasing need for capital investment, to meet the constant productive expansion which in turn requires continuous technological improvements;
2. Qualified and efficient managerial personnel, called for by the diversity of the Company's industry. Few of the members of the Co-operative possess the necessary qualifications to fit them for the difficult tasks devolving upon them, a fact which is the cause of occasional management crises, obviously injurious to the smooth working of the Company's business;
3. Hired labour presents a problem which casts a heavy cloud over the otherwise fairly clear Ha'argaz skies. The Histadruth bodies as well as Ha'argaz itself have been giving the matter very serious consideration lately, as a result of which a resolution was adopted, obliging Ha'argaz to admit to membership one hundred of its permanent hired workers within a comparatively short period of time.
4. Ha'argaz has been called upon by Government Authorities, Histadruth and Co-operative bodies to contribute its share to the country's development by establishing branch-enterprises in various lines of industry in what is termed "development areas", especially in the Negev (the southernmost part of the country) with a view, among other things, to assisting in the integration of new settlers and providing them with added sources of employment. The plant established in Ramleh, mentioned above, is the first step in this direction.

The other Societies in the wood-working section are for the most part small undertakings, scattered all over the country. The biggest is "Etzion" in Jerusalem, the result of a merger between three small Co-operatives some years ago.

The state of the small Societies, which suffer from varying degrees of financial and economic instability, varies also according to the state of the building market, on which they depend for their well-being and existence. That is why there is, at times, a wave of intensified activity in the organising of new Co-operatives, while at others an increased number of Societies fold up, unable to hold out against the ebb tide of building activity. This, alas, seems to be the fate of productive co-operation in general.

In the small and medium sized Co-operatives there is also the problem of hired labour, and the ways for its elimination or, at least, restriction. This is aggravated by the surprising shortage of man-power in this particular line, especially of candidates for membership in the Wood-working Co-operatives. The youth in Israel, too, shows little, if any, enthusiasm for the industry. And ever present, in all its gravity, is the financial problem. All these Societies have either old, worn out machinery, or equipment which, although renewed a few years ago, lags far behind the latest inventions and the up-to-date equipment in the possession of private enterprises set up and run by individual capitalists, without which one can hardly hope to stand up to the growing requirements of modern industry. This, of course, is also true of all of the Societies of the Productive Co-operative Movement. It is true, also, to a certain extent of the Service Co-operatives.

If we can overcome the financial difficulty, which is a key problem demanding an early solution, Productive Co-operation in Israel can expand and gain force. There has been in some circles here an awakening to the needs of this Movement, and ways and means are sought to enhance co-operative consciousness and an interest in Co-operation, especially among the youth.

I T A L Y

CONFEDERAZIONE COOPERATIVA ITALIANA

Co-operative Societies in the joinery and woodworking industries date back to the early part of this century and have developed particularly during the last fifteen years.

Those affiliated to the Italian Co-operative Confederation, (C.C.I.), are especially well developed in Venetia, Lombardy and Emilia Romagna, but there are also some outstanding societies in Piedmont, in the Marche region, in Liguria, Pulia, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia.

Most Societies produce fittings and furniture. Among the oldest in Lombardy are the Workers' Productive and Labour Society for wood processing of Binzago di Cesano Maderno, founded in 1911, and the Joinery and Kindred Trades Co-operative Society of Binasco, founded in 1920. The latter is mainly concerned with the manufacture of fittings in its own factory, which is well organised and equipped with ribbon saws, circular saws, moulding and planing machines, and all other necessary tools.

In Liguria the Tuscan-Ligurian Co-operative of Ortonovo should be mentioned, which produces fittings and furniture, and employs when necessary a considerable number of outworkers and apprentices.

The Joiners' Co-operative Society of Fiorenzuola d'Adda, "La Popolare" Joiners' Co-operative of Lecce, and the Joinery and Kindred Trades Co-operative of Zibello should also be mentioned.

Some of these Societies undertake work which is not specifically joinery, but is an inherent part of the wood industry - such as the felling of timber-trees and wood cultivation; the "A.L.M.A." Co-operative Society of Castiglione d'Adda is of this type.

It should also be noted that many Co-operative Societies in the building industry have a special joinery section which complements their main building work.

Apart from the group of Societies producing furniture and fittings, there are other Co-operatives, fewer in number, of an artisanal type working in the wood industry, such as the Artisanal Co-operative Society of Casalnuovo Monterotaro, which produces artistic objects in wood or wood and iron. Another, in Reggio Emilia, makes packing cases. The "Barrel" Co-operative Society of Marsala, as its name implies, makes barrels of all sizes in chestnut wood, as well as bungs and other auxiliary products.

The "Cooperativa Sediaria" of Serrastretta is particularly interesting. Founded in 1907, it has about 50 members, all artisans who strip wood for making chairs. They take an active part in the enterprise and guarantee the marketing of the products.

At Calangianus in Sardinia, there is a Productive Co-operative Society for the production of cork; it was established recently when a number of artisans united to combat the slump in this sector and is already one of the foremost firms producing cork squares for the manufacture of bottle corks, shoe soles, also wool and paper made from cork. At present, fifty workers are employed, but a considerable increase in productivity and consequently of manpower, is envisaged because of the innumerable uses for cork paper, such as cork tips for cigarettes and visiting cards. This Society is the only one of its kind in Italy.

To complete the picture of this particular sector, mention must be made of the large organisations of a co-operative character existing in certain parts of Italy, especially in Venetia, like the Co-operative Furniture Factory at Annone with completely mechanical equipment, including a large hydraulic press for the preparation of veneered and embossed wood. This organisation was conceived and founded by a group of expert craftsmen in furniture-making, which demands skilled technical preparation and complete understanding of the organisation of laboratory work and the study of trade requirements.

In the Sutrio (Upper Carnia) region, there is a syndicate of Craftsmen in Decorative Arts, whose production is steadily improving. This organisation, with 156 workers, has a warehouse for the storage of raw materials and furniture, a permanent Exhibition of furniture at Sutrio in a building which belongs to it and buys raw materials as well as selling the products of its members.

At Manzano (Eastern Frioul), a Syndicate for the Development of Chair Manufacture in Frioul, has been formed which comprises 2,170 employees and produces 15,000 chairs daily. Besides rationalising the operation of existing plants, the Syndicate intends to expand both the home and foreign markets; it envisages collective buying and selling, organises exhibitions, promotes the most modern techniques, encourages collaboration between the various producers and organises information bureaux and instruction visits.

The main problems of the Productive and Artisanal Societies in the woodworking industry are: as far as plant production is concerned, the improvement of machinery and, consequently, the financial means for obtaining more modern equipment; as regards other sectors, organised market research, the merging of small organisations into bigger and consequently stronger organisations. A considerable development is foreseen in the future, especially as regards the co-operative organisation of the artisanal sector which, in Italy, can be regarded as being in the way of progress.

I T A L Y

LEGA NAZIONALE DELLE COOPERATIVE

The National League of Co-operative and Mutual Insurance Societies groups 64 Productive Societies in the wood industry, comprising about 3,000 members. These Societies are distributed geographically, as follows - Piedmont 1, Liguria 2, Lombardy 5, Venetia 7, Emilia 31, Tuscany 10, Marches 1, Latium 1, Campania 1, Calabria 2, Sicily 3.

The League also includes in its membership 6 Service Co-operatives, or Syndicates, with about 1,000 members. These are for artisans in the trade who, while remaining independent, obtain certain services from the Co-operative at reduced cost (collective buying of raw materials and semi-products, the use of particularly expensive machines, exhibitions and marketing of goods, etc.).

Of these, 2 are at Bologna, 1 at Reggio Emilia, 1 at Pisa, 1 at Arezzo and 1 at Cerea (Verona).

Their total sales during 1960 amounted to about Lire 7 milliards.

They can be subdivided, according to production, as - Furniture production 10 Co-operatives; joinery 8, joinery and furniture 19, packing cases 10, joinery work 17 Co-operatives.

In addition the League groups 46 other Co-operative Societies with 3,700 members. These are not specifically concerned with joinery work, but are linked with the woodworking industry. Their activities include the cultivation of poplar trees, forest maintenance, the sawing and trading of wood, etc.

They are found in the following regions: Lombardy 26, Venetia 1, Emilia 7, Tuscany 9, Abruzzi 1, Campania 2.

In recent years, a development in the structure of the Societies in this sector has been reflected in the introduction of modern fittings, machines and techniques into the production cycle. Consequently, some Societies have up-to-date equipment and are organised on an industrial basis. However, there are still some small undertakings in which production is characterised by predominance of the man-power factor over capital, and, therefore, by artisanal or semi-artisanal working methods.

It should be noted that the modernisation of such undertakings, due to their extreme difficulty in obtaining credit, both for equipment and working capital, has only been achieved through the spirit of sacrifice of the members, who have generally invested part of their wages and working profits in the enterprise.

To explain how these sacrifices were possible would mean going back to the origins of these Societies, which were formed, for the most part, after 1945 by unemployed workers or those dismissed as a result of trade union clashes and who had, as a result, a keen awareness of the class system and the principles of association.

Moreover, the favourable combination of circumstances in 1960 has, to some extent, favoured the development of the enterprises. However, in general their profit-making capacity has been low, despite profits realised by the larger capitalist companies. This proves that the existence and development of Workers' Productive Societies, as well as of lesser important productive activities in general, are extremely precarious, because of the ties of economic and productive interdependence which link them to monopoly concerns. The latter take advantage of their economic and political power in order to increase their profits as much as possible, thus obstructing and restricting the possibilities of development for almost all Productive Societies not working under monopoly conditions.

The National Association of Workers' Productive Societies is particularly concerned with these enterprises with a view to organising them to adapt their production to the ever-increasing demands of the market and to facilitate their relations with the market itself.

Through the National Association (A.N.C.I.A.) many agreements have been made whereby Societies are able to buy goods, with a high rate of consumption, on most advantageous terms.

In addition, an ad hoc Committee is studying the economic and financial aspects and the problems of organisation of a plant for the manufacture of compressed wood, of which the production could be completely undertaken by the co-operatives themselves.

In the field of technical assistance to the enterprises, there is evidence of an increasingly fuller exchange of experiences between directors of the different Societies to find the most valuable ideas and experiences, even principles, and to pass these on to all Organisations. ANCIA will also undertake another task of primary importance: the organisation of a department for drawing up plans to increase the rationalisation of production techniques by simplifying construction details and modernising and adapting patterns, thus maintaining a very high standard of workmanship.

In the furniture section, particularly, this department will need to study construction lines and principles in order to satisfy the demands and habits of the most varied markets and customers.

As regards the marketing of the products of the Joineries contacts have existed for a long time with Building Co-operatives which have already led to the opening up of a home market for the products of woodworking co-operatives - prospects of which for the future seem even more promising.

A.N.C.I.A. will devote especial attention to the export of furniture, so that it can be introduced on the markets of all countries. As regards the home market, supplementary exhibitions are being organised in connection with the permanent displays organised by the furniture co-operatives' syndicates and by artisans in this sector.

Finally, greater attention must be given to Service Co-operatives and syndicates already set up by the woodworking artisans to which others will soon be added. In fact, they are in the process of being established, as one of the most far-reaching activities to which the National Association of Workers Productive Co-operative Societies is devoting the greater part of its efforts.

Since 1945 the C.A.M.A. Syndicate at Bologna has been in existence, which groups 420 members and, from its timber yards, supplies 1,500 woodworking artisans with all the products they need.

It has a laboratory equipped with modern machines and presses where operations for the preparation of veneers are carried out for customers.

Other syndicates of this type have been set up more recently at Pisa, Arezzo and Reggio Emilia. In Bologna and Cerea (Verona) there are two Service Co-operatives of artisan furniture manufacturers which have organised a Furniture Exhibition to enable members to display their goods suitably and to negotiate sales.

For a long time large capitalist concerns have penetrated the furniture industry by means of limited companies and supermarkets, created for profit-making by excluding the artisan from the consumers' market. To do this, a very simple system is used which consists of ordering furniture from artisans at very low prices, often providing them with the materials - which represents another source of profit - and selling the furniture to the public.

Because of this situation, it is evident that the Service Co-operatives mentioned are an extremely important instrument of protection for the artisan and, moreover, facilitate their progress towards autonomous organisation, which alone, in their opinion, can promote the economic and political reforms indispensable to the solution of their problems.

Finally, it should be remembered how important it is, for the realisation of our proposed objectives, that the Productive and Artisanal Societies should benefit from a more favourable credit legislation which envisages not only the problem of credit for equipment purposes, but also the problems of securities and working credit.

Without that, co-operative enterprises will not be able to fit into the present system of market economy, and adapt themselves to technical developments, except by incredible effort and then very inadequately.

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S W E D E N

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The Vaermbol Industries comprise the Vaermbol Wood-processing Industry, Ltd., and the Vaermbol Stone-processing Industry Ltd. These industries were established to solve a social problem. Work had to be found for the workers who lived there, since the previous hemp industry had ceased. The new industry was able to employ many of these workers and today has 160 workers and employees.

The wood-processing industry comprises a saw-mill and a joinery as well as a generating plant. The saw-mill, which is quite modern with circular saws, buys uncut wood and pieces of timber from the National Authority for Agricultural and Forest Land, for forest owners' organisations, land owners and peasants.

Annual consumption amounts to 40,000 pieces of wood, equal to 250,000 cubic feet of logs. All timber goes directly from the saw-mill to a modern drying-machine and is dry after 6 days (20 - 25% of the water). The wood is then made into parts for cupboards, windows frames and garage doors. After that the drying is completed in drying rooms (8 - 12% of water).

The joinery produces mass-produced cupboards and window frames for 4,000 to 4,500 dwellings a year, as well as garage doors on a large scale. Parts for 52,000 complete cupboard units and window frames for 20,000 units are produced.

In the joinery workshop a vast amount of experimental painting work is undertaken in collaboration with the trade-union building societies in order to determine the most economic methods of finishing before delivery.

The factory runs an apprenticeship school in collaboration with the town of Katrineholm, which is responsible for the theoretical teaching. The courses last for two years and each year 10 students are trained as joiners for interior decoration work. New suggestions are actively encouraged and good results have already been obtained. About 20 proposals are studied every year and half of this number have been bought. Apart from the remuneration given, lots are drawn among the proposers for a government bond. The largest amount ever awarded for a proposal is 2,500 crowns.

The woodwork industry employs 120 workers and employees. The present value of production is 6,500,000 crowns own manufacture and 2,000,000 crowns remainder.

The buyers of the Vaermbol factories' products are the Svenska Riksbyggen Co-operatives, H.L.M. Organisations, and individuals.

The trade-union building enterprise (in the Stockholm building industry) has a wood-yard for planks, the Vaeddoe Saw-mill, which is run in connection with the main activity and is dependent on local price conditions. It has an alternating saw and uses a port on the Baltic sea for importing wood. The wood imported is in the form of planks and further sawing is done in the saw-mill.

The Profit and Loss account amounts to 1,000,000 crowns a year, which is equivalent to 130,000 cubic feet of wood.

The number of workers and employees is 12.

The U.B.G. trade-union building enterprise (in the Uppsala building industry) has its own joinery for special joinery work such as entrance doors, window frames, school and laboratory fittings, etc.

A saw-mill with a steam drying-room meets the special needs for sawnwood. The wood is bought uncut and sawing operations are carried on for two months of the year. The drying is done in two drying-rooms with a joint capacity of 400 cubic feet per week. (11,000 cubic feet of first quality wood are needed annually for joinery purposes).

The value of joinery production amounts to 750,000 crowns a year; the average number of workers is 23.