

UP FRONT

The new industrial revolution

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WITH ONE OF the largest events on the pulp and paper calendar behind us and 2007 moving into its second half, perhaps it's time to look both ways before we cross the threshold into the future.

Having attended the recent PulPaper conference in Helsinki, to me it seemed to go well with a good buzz on the floor. There was the usual large international media contingent on hand eager to hear what the various speakers, associations and suppliers had to say.

In line with the big trend at conferences this year, one session in Helsinki focused on biomass conversion to energy and chemicals.

Power to the people

The biorefinery concept helps tackle two birds with one stone: energy and the environment. In a recent Ernst & Young survey about pulp and paper trends in the next five years, an overwhelming number of industry executives/management said high energy costs would continue. The electrical share of energy consumption is growing and will continue to do so as developing nations bring electricity to their populations: a real case of power to the people. It's critical that industry learns to become as energy self-sufficient as possible because if it comes to a choice between a state supplying energy to its citizens or to industry, the citizens will win out. And, industry's energy costs in such a situation will be exorbitant.

In a press conference before the PulPaper conference, a summary of the EU policy on energy and climate change was presented. By 2020, the EU set mandatory targets of 20% fewer CO₂ emissions compared with 1990 levels; 20% energy efficiency improvement; a 20% share of renewables of all energy produced; and, a 10% biofuel target of all motor fuels. This is what the heads of state call: "The new industrial revolution".

Obviously, our industry has a role to play. But, it will not come easy or cheap. At the press conference, one executive estimated a fully-fledged biorefinery to produce

biofuels would cost about \$300 million. These days, most of the producers don't have that kind of spare cash lying around, not do they have the expertise to operate such a facility. That's why partnerships will be needed. For example, the recent Chevron:Weyerhaeuser agreement could be a portent of what's to come.

Despite the new opportunities, it is important not to take our eyes off what a mill's main reason for existence is: to make high quality pulp, paper and/or board.

For example, in this issue, we look at developments as diverse as recovery boilers, converting, water treatment, transport and automation as well as a look at the world's largest newsprint machine at the Shandong Chenming no. 5 mill in China.

Looking ahead, three conferences are coming up, in China, Brazil and India. Two of these nations are rapidly becoming major powers in this industry and the third, India, has some ambitious plans (*PPI*, August 2006). *PPI* will have a major presence at all of these conferences and will provide extensive coverage of happenings in the regions in the months to come. It will be interesting to see how they handle the need for industrial development, jobs for the people and an improved standard of living with the responsibility of making as small an environmental footprint as possible.

Finally, after almost six years in Brussels, it's time to say goodbye. I have made many new friends and have enjoyed visiting a host of countries, seeing mills and attending conferences. This is something I never would have had the opportunity to do otherwise. It's also due to the openness of the industry that I have been able to do so. One of the first things I wrote after I came here was to implore the industry to keep the doors open. The message still applies.

After 27 years of covering the industry, I wanted to put my feet up and take it easy so I will be returning to Canada this month. However, RISI has asked that I stay on and continue my writing – for the *IFPTA Journal*, *Pulp & Paper* and *PPI* – on a contract basis. My best wishes to all.