

# Technical Information Service

## Practical answers to technical questions

*NRC's Technical Information Service helps transfer scientific and technical knowledge from laboratory and library to factory floor.*

Where can you get advice if you are involved in a small business with a technical problem — if, for instance, the bows of your trawler fleet are corroding rapidly; if aluminum panels are separating from the plywood sheets with which you manufacture kiosks for gas stations; if you find you are handling cartons of clothing too many times in your warehouse; if you want to manufacture some other product when your rubber shoe sole-making machinery is standing idle?

The answer for many businessmen is NRC's Technical Information Service, or TIS, an industrial troubleshooting service that has been supplying free advice to industries in Canada for the last 30 years.

The service, unique in the world, has been providing Canadian industry in general and small to medium-sized industry in particular with the most direct access possible to current technology as it applies to the solution of industrial problems. (Firms with fewer than 200 employees represent about 90 per cent of Canada's manufacturing

enterprises and account for almost half the industrial production and employment in the country.) This has resulted in improved production operations, increased productivity, development of new processes, products and markets, and reduction of costs and increased profits — all of which have added up to a substantial contribution to the social and economic development of Canada.

Comments Gerard Kirouac, Director of the Technical Information Service: "Some people say that small industry is one in which all the headaches are in the same head. Others tend to define it by the number of employees." Either way, half the firms in the small business sector have a very low level of technology, or none at all, while the other half with a good technological background do not always know where to obtain needed information and often require assistance even when it is available. Merely transferring documents to these small industrialists, who are everything from shop foremen to plant managers, is not sufficient — they do not have time

to read volumes of print. Instead, by direct personal contact in the plant between the owner/operator and a field officer (now numbering 44 across Canada), TIS is able to provide both information and assistance — or technology transfer.

"Information per se," points out René Paquin (Manager, Special Projects, and a former chief chemist in charge of a small business research operation) "is useless to industry unless it is interpreted, analyzed, and adapted to its needs. "The big difficulty," continues Dr. Paquin, "is that approximately 80 to 90 per cent of the problems that are referred to us by small industry are not in fact the real problem, and this is the first task of our staff — to make sure the problem as stated is the real one, and then, that it is well defined. Our people are generalists, trained specifically to identify problems. We try to look at the overall picture, what we call the total approach."

Organized in conjunction with provincial research agencies, TIS offices across the country maintain regular

**Like many others, this small, family-owned plant uses the Technical Information Service.**

**Comme beaucoup d'autres, cette petite usine familiale utilise le Service d'information technique.**

Bruce Kane, NRC/CNRC

