

Appendixes

Summary of the Technology, Renewable Resources, and American Crafts OTA Workshop, July 12, 1983

American crafts play important economic and cultural roles. The economic impact is difficult to document, but several hundred thousand people are directly involved, and retail sales are known to total about \$10 million in each of several States. For some people, including isolated elderly workers, the unemployed, and the underemployed, craftwork provides an irreplaceable source of income. For others, it is more important culturally than economically. Crafts symbolize important community values, distinguish among traditions, and initiate newcomers into a common heritage.

Many crafts—for example, scrimshaw, woodworking, basketry, and leatherworking—use renewable natural resources for raw materials. The total amount of materials used or needed largely is unknown, but some craftworkers increasingly express concern about decreasing material availability. A variety of factors affect availability: legal restrictions, changing technology, destruction of wild plant and animal habitat, and demand for other products.

Technology's role usually has not been analyzed, but in some cases it is significant. Small-scale buyers, such as craftspeople, may be unable to influence technology when changes are geared to major buyers, such as new lumber processing for the construction industry. These technological changes may be beneficial or detrimental to craftspeople. In either case, craftworkers such as makers of musical instruments and boatbuilders must choose

to substitute new materials, adapt to new technology, or stop practicing their craft. Technology has also been important in protecting natural populations. Synthetic materials are replacing ivory in some crafts; improved marking systems allow legitimate sources of ivory to be used; and international management systems have been developed to limit illegal traffic.

Legislative remedies have been applied to problems such as these. Demand for items such as ivory, feathers, and coral is high enough to create a black market and deplete natural populations. Illegal traffic in animal products may reach \$20 million annually. The popularity of American crafts has other negative aspects: craft income may be intentionally underreported, design theft may take place, and inexpensive foreign reproductions may be mass-produced and marketed.

A large number of areas remain for clarification and analysis and many have relevance to public policies. These include:

- health hazards of craft materials;
- industrial/craft cooperation;
- potential for craft cooperatives in economic development;
- review of legislation;
- renewable resource needs of craftworkers;
- technologies to protect craft designs;
- future of technology in crafts; and
- impacts of crafts in America.