



Officers and directors of the National Arborist Association at the NAA winter meeting at Tampa, Fla.: Left to right (seated), Edward C. Shearer, Farrens Tree Surgeons, Jacksonville, Fla., first vice-president; Kenneth P. Soergel, Kenneth P. Soergel & Associates, Gibsonia, Pa., president; Paul R. Walgren, Jr., Walgren Tree Experts, Hamden, Conn., second vice-president; (standing), Harry A. Morrison, Wilmette, Ill., retiring president; Glenn Burns, Karl Kummerling & Associates, Canton, O., director; William P. Lanphaer III, Forest City Tree Protection Co., Cleveland, O., treasurer; William A. Rae, Frost & Higgins Co., Burlington, Mass., secretary, and Riley R. Stevens, Stevens Tree Surgery, Portland, Ore., director.



James W. Polk

## Arborists Change Membership Rules At Winter Meeting Held At Tampa

Arborists no longer need to be members of the International Shade Tree Conference in order to join the National Arborist Association. This change was made during the regular winter meeting of the national group. Meeting at Tampa, Fla., tree care operators also set up two new membership categories. The board of directors may now approve associate memberships for organizations who supply or service tree care companies. Another category was established for privileged members. The board, by a two-thirds vote may extend this type membership to any retired NAA member of the arboriculture profession.

Another noteworthy change in by-laws of the group, according to Clarke W. Davis, NAA executive secretary, was the decision to henceforth hold their annual meeting each February, rather

than during the regular August meeting of the ISTC.

In the board session, previous mail approval for 21 new member firms was reaffirmed. Board members approved a final draft for their lightning protection standard, established a new committee to prepare a statistic questionnaire, and approved a motion enabling the group's executive committee to set the location for future winter meetings.

### EDP Possibilities

In the formal program sessions, the group invited a specialist to discuss the feasibility of computers for tree care companies. James W. Polk, First Data Corporation, Tampa, Fla., outlined the 3 current methods for electronic data processing available to a company. Computers can be purchased or leased, he said. But the most practical step for many smaller businesses is a

third method which is use of a custom computer service.

Data service bureau centers offer a service in which they write programs to handle the various jobs desired by a company. They provide professional data processing counseling, help upgrade business procedures, set up cost accounting, and other services needed by a client. They can prepare economic surveys, develop market analyses, and make feasibility studies. Such custom services can also staff and operate a client's own owned or leased equipment.

Polk warned arborists that electronic data processing is not a program which can be attempted on a crash basis. Rather, he said, it needs careful consideration and time. Management needs to become acquainted with the capabilities of the system and its possible uses. As of now, Polk said, there is no

set formula for obtaining a profit by using a data processing system. Profits, he stressed, are derived from application of sound management principles, adequate planning, proper organization, and controlled execution.

### Union Procedures Aired

How to react when the union knocks at your door was the subject of Daniel R. Coffman, Jr., Jacksonville, Fla., attorney. Coffman spent a good portion of his time telling arborists what wise management does before the so-called knock on the door. There is a crying need, he said, for management to become more knowledgeable and sophisticated on employee relations.

Coffman reported that he himself was well versed in the union guidebook written for union organizers. He further said he had discussed union problems in organizing with a union business agent.

Briefly, according to the union agent, chances of getting workers to organize are poor if employees are convinced that the company is not taking advantage of them. Other factors hurting unions in their efforts to organize workers are: employees who have pride in their work, good performance records

kept by the company which show that employee efforts are recognized and appreciated, a lack of highhanded treatment or discipline, no claims of favoritism which has not been earned through work performance, and supervisors who have good relationships with subordinates.

Coffman's union contact said his first advice to a non-union employer who wanted to stay non-union would be to get rid of supervisors who refuse to practice good day-to-day human relations in directing their employees. Also, he suggested getting rid of all borderline defensive-type employees who have forgotten (or never learned) how to give their employer a good day's work without griping. This direct union advice, Coffman said, confirms an old saying that the best union organizers are "first-line unqualified supervisors."

The first-line supervisor, Coffman said, is the keystone of good employee relations. He gives the company its image, whether good or bad. Coffman asked arborist employers to question their own operation. Do you, he asked them, have a method of supervisory selection which considers education, prior training, experience, and leadership ability? Succeeding questions from Coffman to arborists were: do you provide supervisors with adequate training in company policies, practices, and human relations; do you maintain an adequate margin between the supervisor's pay and that of his subordinates; and do you promptly follow up a supervisory selection to determine if it was a correct one?

Supervisors, Coffman said, must realize that they have a function other than getting the work out. They must know their men, and the men must feel free to communicate with them when they have problems or grievances.

Workers want security, Coff-



Daniel R. Coffman

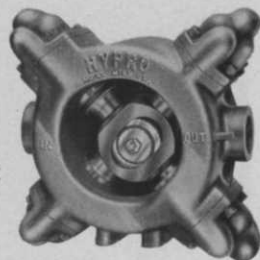
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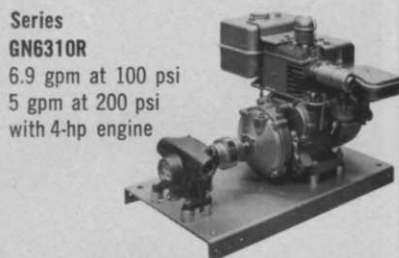


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man went on, and those in non-union companies often fear that favoritism may determine who gets laid off. For this and other reasons, there needs to be a system to handle day-to-day worker grievances. Also, workers fear the accelerating rise in living costs. Union promises of negotiated wage increases thus appeal to the struggling worker. Therefore, Coffman believes that the most important single factor in employer-employee relations is the absolute necessity for upward communication, the kind that tells management what employees really think and feel about their work. Whether large or small, he said, a company can have good employee relations only if it has good supervisors and good employee communications. The larger the company, the greater the need for communicating and the greater the problems in accomplishing this.

Once the union does knock on the door, or sends the so-called "demand" letter, Coffman stressed that the employer maintain his "cool." This is not the time, Coffman told the group, to become emotional or fearful. His advice, though technical in nature, indicated to the uninitiated the need for labor counsel. Ramifications of each step taken by an employer at this point hinge on numerous rules, regulations, and court opinions. Best course, based on Coffman's experience and knowledge, though he did not voice this opinion, would be to avoid pitfalls by immediately seeking knowledgeable counsel. Employers have many rights in influencing their employees prior to a union election, none of which threatens any employee or promises him special benefits. But what actually constitutes an unfair labor practice is often subject to judicial review. Practicing a regular program of preventative maintenance is the most profitable policy, according to Coffman.