

**I**t's important for our industry to take a more active role in the general educational process in our own country so that we can produce a "flow" of people into the green industry.

We are no longer too small or too young an industry to simply hire someone for a job in hopes that they will like it, stay with it and progress in it.

It is now time for us to become involved in educating people for our industry and developing programs that promote a career in it.

While this is being done at the college level, more needs to be done in our vocational and technical schools where two-year or shorter programs can be created for those interested in green industry careers.

At the same time, I would like to see how certain high schools would react to the introduction of industry educational efforts in their vocational programs.

There is no greater challenge facing us than both the long and short-term shortage of employees. It strangles us in terms of consistent production, professional customer service, and overall stability.

Most importantly, this shortage will affect our willingness and ability to expand our operations as we move into the next millennium.

Several years ago I read that by the year 2015 there would be several million more jobs in the United States than there will be people to fill them. This hardly seemed possible at the time, but makes more sense today. When we read about three to five percent national unemployment what we're really reading is that anyone who wants a job, already has one. And probably the choice of many others. If you consider that more jobs are being produced, then even a downturn in one segment of our economy, or one part of the country, will not have more than a temporary impact.

Here are some other "employment" statistics. By 2000 a million new inhabitants will be born every

four to five days! The problem is the extreme unevenness of population growth because most of it will occur in the most underdeveloped countries. That's 90 million a year, and 95 percent of them will live in the world's poorest nations.

For example, according to United Nations figures, Lagos, capital of the African country of Nigeria, will be the world's fifth largest city by the year 2005. It will have 15 million people if the present growth trend continues. Indeed, a "youth bulge" is predicted for more than 57 countries, including three former Soviet republics, and also Egypt and Algeria.

My point here is that we may well face the next century with jobs being in one place, and the people to fill them somewhere else. As you look at the growing number of Hispanics at work in the green industry, it should be apparent that bringing the people to the jobs is a trend already well underway.

As we attempt to solve our labor shortages, we will also have to deal with the imbalance in educational skills. Today, we in the United States must stay on our toes to keep up with new technological and scientific advancements.

It seems my office is full of perfectly good computers which are outdated shortly after they are purchased.

At the same time, fully one half of the world's population (maybe three billion people) have never placed or received a telephone call!

Thus, even if we can figure out the logistics of getting the people to the jobs, we have some serious training to do once we get them here. And remember, we simply cannot move the factory overseas. Lawn care, mowing maintenance, and landscaping must be done here, not shipped out for subassembly. □

## Employees come from our schools?



**BOB ANDREWS**  
Contributing Editor