



Cutting classes

Photo by Carolyn Shanley

Mike Dunn, senior mechanical engineering major from Sugarland, demonstrates wood cutting techniques at a class held for students interested in working on Bonfire this year. Dunn has been

giving the wood cutting instructions twice nightly, 5:30 and 6 p.m., in front of Sbis Dining Hall. His last class will be tonight. Anyone interested in cutting for bonfire must attend one of the classes.

New technology paying off

Consumers cringe at the thought of having to pay more money for energy, and new technology used to mean higher prices.

But two Texas A&M economists say that energy from shale, coal or plants, ultimately will keep fuel prices from spiraling.

Dr. Charles Smithson of the University's economics department said: "As prices have increased over the years or as resources have become more difficult to obtain, man has always looked towards alternative methods for meeting demand. Certainly new methods for getting fuel are more expensive, but they supply our additional energy needs."

Smithson and Dr. S. Charles Maurice, also in the economics department, have authored a study on the economic feasibility of assimilating new technology.

The economists maintain that technology has been analyzed through ad hoc evaluations of specific projects rather than through a general approach based on generally accepted economic principles.

"Suppose someone says that

more natural gas will be needed on the West Coast in the future," Smithson said. "The amount of the shortage is estimated and it is assumed that this shortage can be alleviated by gas produced in the Rocky Mountains via nuclear stimulation.

The extra gas would cost more to produce than conventionally produced gas, Smithson said, but when prices increase to a point where new technology isn't more expensive than old technology, additional supplies can be feasibly produced. This increases competition and ultimately keeps prices down, he said.

"Analysts fail to consider that in a freely functioning market, after some period of adapting new technology there will be no shortage, or gap, in the supply of natural resources if government permits prices to vary," Smithson explained. "As prices rise, suppliers usually find it profitable to extract resources that would be unprofitable at lower prices."

Smithson said consumers, not government officials, decide when new technology will be used in the marketplace to increase energy supplies. Smithson cited the oil

boom in Texas along the Austin made it possible to use more expensive technology for obtaining additional supplies.

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Oil program to be given by museum

"Boomtown U.S.A." is the title of a two-part program to be presented this week by the Brazos Valley Museum. The program will feature presentations on oil retrieval in the Brazos Valley.

The first part of the program is a lecture scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, in the Brazos Center at 3242 Briarcrest Dr.

The second part of the program is a field trip to a drilling rig and a working oil well near Kurten. The field trip is scheduled for 9 a.m. Saturday.

Ten spaces are still open for the program which has a limited enrollment of 25 people. Four dollars will be charged for the program and participants will carpool with the instructors on the field trip.

Interested persons should contact Museum Director Dale Bode at 779-2195 for more information.

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