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LETTERS

Test-Tube Food

DEAR SIR:

In your June 24 issue, the excerpt from Dr. Rosin's and Mr. Eastman's "Road to Abundance" (page 540) posed a problem which is, in this day and age and in this country, a highly academic one. Frankly, I doubt very much if the average citizen questions the ability of science to provide him with a perfectly balanced diet of "ersatz" food. On the other hand, I equally doubt if the public is prepared to abandon steak (even at today's prices) for a civilian version of K-rations or what have you, even if this could be provided to him at a fraction of the cost of the so-called natural foods.

The public has been quick to respond to such artificial foods as oleomargarine, due of course, to three factors: low cost, a product which is esthetically acceptable, and good advertising.

The proper avenue for the scientist to follow in seeking new foods is to remember the old adage that although some eat to live, most people live to eat—to a degree, anyway. I don't mean that the nutritional aspects should not be first in the mind of the researcher, but he must not lose sight of the fact that well-prepared food is one of the little joys of life, and even a Ubangi savage has his own ideas of what tastes good.

It may well come to pass that the world food problem will be solved only by the mass manufacture of artificial foods. The job of science, however, is more than merely providing methods whereby this can be accomplished. There must be a constant awareness of the fact that public acceptance is absolutely necessary, and this will come only in slow degrees. Otherwise, the problem may become meaningless because dead people don't eat.

I believe that Dr. Rosin and Mr. Eastman have too low a regard for the mentality of judgment of Mr. John Q. Public. In a country where there is an abundance of good things to eat, science will have to compete with the existing food market in every respect, if it wants to present successfully a new "test-tube" food. But let them come up with a really tasty product at low cost properly promoted, and, perhaps, the cow will one day be seen only in zoos.

More important, however, than my amusement with the excerpt in question is the fact that the JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD CHEMISTRY has chosen to make its last page a forum in which problems of this nature can be intelligently discussed. Often the accusation

is made—and rightly so—that technical journals are so wrapped up in their own little specialized worlds that they fail to visualize where their field is properly integrated into human society and its problems.

In something so vitally fundamental as food, a failure of this sort could easily negate the good which a publication of this nature can and should accomplish toward the goal of providing the people of the world with enough nourishing food to eat. For this reason, I hope that "Perspective" will continue to provide the thought provoking comment which has characterized its content until now.

THOMAS A. ZIEBARTH
Milwaukee, Wis.

Agreement on Biochemical Engineering

DEAR SIR:

Your editorial on biochemical engineering in the May 13 issue approached the subject from the proper angle, in my opinion. Your point that biochemical engineering is a branch of chemical engineering just as physical chemistry is a branch of chemistry is well taken.

My greatest complaint is against those who would make it a separate branch of engineering. Actually it seems to me that biochemical engineering's exact field has not gelled as yet. So far, it seems to be primarily a combination of chemical engineering and microbiology rather than chemical engineering and biochemistry.

W. L. FAITH
Corn Products Refining Co.

Readers of the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry

Think of this column as your forum. The editors are interested in your views of the problems and trends which affect agriculture and food, and so are many of your fellow readers.

You are also invited to communicate through this column your own knowledge and experience relative to information and opinion that appear in the pages of the JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD CHEMISTRY.

If you think you ought to put the editors straight, here's your chance.

THE EDITORS