

See You in Kansas City

NEXT WEEK IN KANSAS CITY the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY will begin a 10-day meeting which will provide the semiannual opportunity for its members to be brought up to date on scientific developments, technological progress, and the general activities within the chemical profession. The Division of Agricultural and Food Chemistry will meet March 24 to 27. In addition to general papers the division will present two special programs of high interest to the pesticides industry. One of these will be a symposium on the formulation of pesticides and the other a symposium on mechanical and engineering aspects of pesticide application. The Garvan Medal will be presented to Betty Sullivan and the Borden Award to Donald Josephson. Both will present medal addresses on the program of the Ag and Food Division. A high light of the program of that meeting will be the paper by C. G. King and Horace Sipple on "Foods: Facts, Fads, and Fancies" to be presented before the luncheon meeting of the Division, Friday at noon.

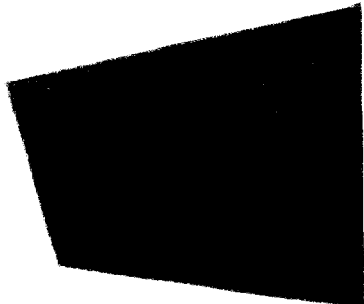
Of further interest to the followers of research in food and nutrition will be the meeting of the Division of Carbohydrate Chemistry, March 29 to 31, and the meeting of the Division of Biological Chemistry which will offer a symposium on amino acids. The Division of Medicinal Chemistry is sponsoring a symposium on diseases of domestic animals.

Beyond the formal program there will be an exceptional opportunity to meet and talk with professional colleagues from all parts of the United States as well as foreign countries. The active support of good professional and scientific societies is a mark of the strong professional man. We'll see you in Kansas City.

Information Needed

THE FEATURE ARTICLE of this issue deals with the agricultural chemicals industry, its status and development trends. The information was gathered by the AG AND FOOD staff through direct contact with people active in the industry in every section of the United States. Fifteen of our editors located in Houston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, and Washington went into the field to get the real low-down on the present state of the pesticides industry. We wanted first-hand information to give the most factual report possible. Two observations of particular interest were made in studying the results of this survey: (1) There are strongly varying points of view about the status of the industry and about its future, and (2) there is almost unanimous opinion that a stronger educational program is needed.

Just where does the industry stand economically and why were 1952 and 1953 difficult years for the business? There are a great many opinions offered in answer to these questions but the amount of factual information so far supporting those opinions with respect to the industry as a whole is very small with respect to the information needed for the formulation of sound business decisions. On looking back there are apparent results of operation in the dark. Inventories were very high last year and it appears that a number of producers turned out a great deal more than was needed or could be sold. The result



was not healthy and there were practices which proved harmful. It was not unusual in our survey to find a relatively well-informed man suggesting that there are difficult days ahead until the industry becomes a little less of a "dog eat dog" industry and others say that price wars by some created a situation which harmed all.

The best source of production and consumption information for the agricultural chemicals industry seems to be in the U. S. Department of Agriculture. But factual data show important gaps. Any improvement the industry can effect in its cooperation with this clearing house of statistics might yield very helpful results.

On the matter of education, there are several directions in which the value of a little effort would seem obvious. We hear estimates of losses attributed to pests totalling as high as \$17 billion a year. Some say that only 10 to 15% of the farmers are using agricultural chemicals. Others estimate that less than 25% of our crop land is protected from pests through the use of scientifically developed pesticides. We do not know the exact extent, but we are certain that it is smaller than it should be and that there are a great many farmers in this country who have not been convinced of the value of these materials. The answer is education.

There are problems with application of pesticides. A great deal of money is spent on the development of any new product before it comes on the market and as a result its characteristics are well known. The danger of damage to crops, animals, or humans can be predicted but the carelessness of the user cannot. New and better methods are needed for impressing the users of pesticides with the importance of carefully following directions.

Public opinion is a very important area where education is needed. The new products of the past decade were welcomed and were hailed as a panacea in the battle of man against insect. But with widespread use came occasional accidents. The developments of science have been made at times to seem sensational and in that same light the misuse of the scientist's products can be made to seem sensational. This is being done with a few cases against agricultural chemicals. The new pesticides seemed to be such blessings and so strongly favorable for the public welfare that there has been a tendency to forget that public opinion seldom seeks out basic facts but takes what is pushed before it. The agricultural chemicals industry has been relatively lax in pushing before the public the great benefits it has brought and can bring. Here again a strong educational program is needed.

More information to the industry about itself, to the users of pesticides about the nature of their products, and to the public about the benefits it is reaping from those products should have top priority in getting agricultural chemicals into a sound position and moving along a clear track.

WALTER J. MURPHY, Editor