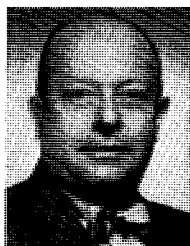


Chemical Progress Week and Industry

L. S. HITCHNER, National Agricultural Chemicals Association

A little action on the part of each individual in the chemical industry can do a great deal toward public understanding of that industry and its importance to our standard of living

AFUNDAMENTAL REASON why the chemical industry occasionally runs the obstacle course of public criticism is that the contributions of chemicals to the everyday lives of Americans are largely indirect and concealed in the quality of consumer products. If you ask a man what benefits he receives from refrigerators, automobiles, television sets, fresh vegetables, and other products with which he comes into contact each day you will observe no difficulty in his formulating an answer. If you were to ask that same man what chemicals had done to contribute to a better way of living and an easement of his labor that same man would be hard-put to give a quick and lucid answer.



L. S. Hitchner

Association of Chemicals

If you were to tell the man in the street that he enjoys good health and long life because of chemical research, he would think you were playing a trick on him. The association of chemicals with products useful to man has never been brought home to the general public. A man does not think of his shirt in relation to cotton, the production of which is dependent upon agricultural chemicals. Nor does he associate the lasting, beautiful quality of the enamel on his automobile with research in chemistry. He does not know that the wide choice and great variety of food products which are available to him the year around are due to the influence of chemistry in agriculture. He does not even know that the food he eats is a complex mixture of chemicals which are digested chemically. He associates modern medicines and disease control entirely with the profession of medicine because he has no knowledge of the role of chemists and of the chemical industry. None of these benefits to man

and his better living is credited to the chemical industry in any degree proportionate to the industry's contributions.

On the other hand, "chemical" and "chemistry" have become associated in the minds of average persons with poison, adulteration, destructive force, and similar uncomplimentary connotations. Because of these false notions about chemicals and because average individuals have no real knowledge of them, many have acquired an inordinate fear and suspicion of chemicals—fear and suspicion that are breeders of unjust criticism. To overcome this false interpretation and to credit the chemical industry with contributions to better everyday living is the prime problem facing our industry today.

The chemical industry is not the first group to experience resistance to the acceptance of new concepts and new products that have a bearing on our daily lives. Vaccines, pasteurization of milk, and chlorination of water were looked upon for many years with a great deal of suspicion. The introduction of aluminum pots and pans gave rise to old wives' tales that they caused cancer. Book matches were pictured as pocket dynamite.

As far as chemicals, food and health are concerned, we are asking the public to cast off social and religious mores which have been built up over thousands of years. Yet in no other country in the world are new ideas and new products accepted as readily as in the United States. Often the biggest deterrent to acceptance is the action of a few opportunists who seize upon the preconceived prejudices to obtain a questionable personal notoriety. The only defense against such individuals is a dissemination of the real facts by individuals who by position or by knowledge are accepted as authorities on the industry.

Dramatic Opportunities This Year

Until recently we have lacked a dramatic situation or a created program to

bring forcefully to the attention of the public the benefits that are continuously being derived from chemical research and chemical use. We have lacked the star to which we could hitch our wagons. Two programs initiated this year, however, present to the chemical industry, and particularly the pesticide industry, a means to carry an educational program not only to the users of pesticides but to the consumers of foods who are the ultimate benefactors of these important products.

Myriad of Facets

The celebration of the Centennial of Professional Entomology in the United States presents a myriad of facets for use by our industry to tell the story. The spectacular and dramatic story about chemicals, food, and health must be told to reach into every home. It's true that this program is designed as an attention-getting mechanism for a single year, but after the initial flash it can reasonably be expected that sufficient momentum will be created to carry it to some degree into the next two or three years.

Long-Time Program

To make certain that the chemical industry continues to sell its worth and necessity to the general public requires a long-time program on a national basis, however. To fill this need, the Manufacturing Chemists' Association has launched a program called "Chemical Progress Week," May 17-22. Basically this program has much in common with the Centennial with respect to the mechanics of reaching the public. The pesticide industry can tie both of these programs into a single plan of operation. The MCA "Chemical Progress Week" adopted the slogan "A Better America Through Chemical Progress." This broad approach can serve in years to come as a means of operation through which our pesticide industry can continue to present its story to the public year after year.

If every employee in the chemical industry would point out to his neighbor one instance of "chemistry at work," much could be accomplished. A thousand small and personalized efforts will serve to give the "mass action" necessary to focus attention on the importance of chemistry in our lives. Associations can devise the plans and the tools, but the success of the program depends upon each company and each individual carrying the story into the home by every conceivable medium.