



An Industry Project For Health

POSITIVE CONSERVED ACTION by the chemical industry in matters of chemicals and health has been suggested by the Manufacturing Chemists' Association. MCA's President William C. Foster in an address three weeks ago stated that an independent laboratory supported by the industry is under consideration. Data and research on chemical hazards, including toxicity, would be correlated in such a laboratory.

There is ample use for a more positive approach to the matter of chemicals and the health of human beings. We applaud constructive attention to the matter.

Members of the chemical profession take pride in the contributions that profession has made to health through such advances as the control of diseases and the improvement of nutrition. But much of the pointing with pride is done either within scientific circles or with an assumption that the listener has at least some of the chemist's point of view. There is too little recognition that the general public is still much more sensitive to a single incident of harm by "chemicals" than to any beneficial accomplishment short of the discovery of a "wonder drug." This was illustrated recently by a scientist who reported, in a public address, his conversation with a newspaper reporter:

Reporter: "Is it true that you reported that modern crops are no longer nutritious because of use of chemical fertilizers?"

Scientist: "It is not true."

Reporter: "Then there is no news value in your remarks."

Another illustration can be found in statistics. In 1949 when there were 99 accidental deaths caused by aspirin and salicylates as compared to 15 deaths from poisoning by modern insecticides. Aspirin and salicylates are chemical compounds but are thought of as medicinal, while the insecticides are thought of as the products of a chemist. Death caused by an insecticide certainly draws much more comment than one caused by aspirin.

Only to stand against the accusations and fight the individual cases is not enough. It is imperative to have sound, well-organized information on chemical materials that are to go into public use. An outstanding example of the awareness of this fact and the expenditure of effort and money can be seen in the new Haskell Laboratory for Toxicology and Industrial Medicine, recently dedicated by the Du Pont Company. The importance attached to such a move is emphasized in an article featured in *Fortune* this month, entitled "Making Synthetics Safe" which is built around the story of the Haskell Laboratory. Other major chemical companies are building toxicological laboratories or supporting extensive work in the interest of assurance of the effects of their products on human health before offering them to the public.

These efforts by the major companies deserve a great deal of credit but the matter must be extended to all of

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the chemical industry if we are to make satisfactory progress in the protection of health while increasing the number of synthetic chemical materials reaching the consumer.

Such a project as that suggested and now being studied by the MCA should not halt the efforts by individual companies or the use of facilities of consulting laboratories for the study of individual products. There is a large gap to be filled in the existing system. There is a great amount of knowledge and skill in the handling of chemical hazards which might be pooled, correlated, and developed further, and there are many new materials such as the radioactive compounds for which new methods of control will be needed. An independent laboratory supported by industry could find plenty to do by starting with those areas. Such a project properly organized and directed could be a valuable investment in a sound future for the chemical industry.

Grasslands, the Crop with a Future

THERE WAS A TIME when the pasture was little more than an exercise lot for farm animals. In too many farms it still is so. But an awakening has begun. Within the next quarter-century no other crops will show such gains as those from grasslands. Pasture and range management has a huge undeveloped potential which the farmer no longer can afford to overlook—nor can the industries serving agriculture.

More than two thirds of this country's acreage is in grasslands, but of that vast area, very little, almost a negligible percentage, is producing near the potential capacity. Pasture crops can be good feed crops and feed accounts for 50 to 85% of the cost of producing foods of animal origin.

We know that in addition to feed values there are other advantages to good grassland management: to maintain and increase fertility and to control erosion. Already in some areas pastures are making profit as replacement for marginal or sub-marginal harvest crops.

There is a visible trend in the U. S. diet away from carbohydrates and fats and toward higher protein content. Pastures are excellent feed sources for producing animal protein foods: milk, eggs, and meat.

In pastures lies an undeveloped resource—a big opportunity for the future. With the feature article this issue, *AG AND FOOD* begins a series of articles aimed toward better grasslands management.