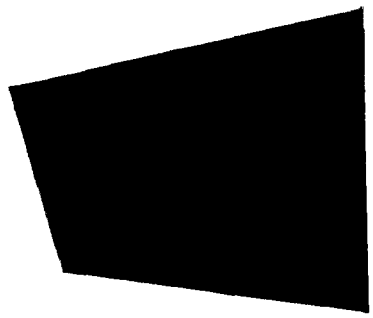

WALTER J. MURPHY, Editor

ACS Fall Meeting

THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY will hold its 128th Meeting in Minneapolis, Sept. 12 through 17. An exceptionally full and varied program is being offered this year in agricultural and food chemistry. As might be expected from a meeting held in this major food production area, there are programs of particular strength in cereals and in dairy chemistry. The Division of Agricultural and Food Chemistry is presenting a symposium on dairy products and by-products September 12th, and on September 15th it will offer a symposium on rumen function. Jointly with the American Association of Cereal Chemists, the division is sponsoring a group of papers on cereals.

The pesticides subdivision will devote Sept. 14 to a symposium on the complex subject of the metabolism of pesticides in plants, mammals, and insects.

The fermentation subdivision, in action on Wednesday and Friday of the meeting, has organized a symposium on improvements in fermentation equipment and processes.

These special groups of papers comprise only a part of the agriculture and food program. The remainder is made up of general papers with subjects spread over a wide range of interest.

The Division of Fertilizer and Soil Chemistry will hold its annual meeting in Minneapolis, with four half-days, Sept. 12 to 14, devoted to a symposium on fertilizer technology. It will include papers dealing with urea-formaldehyde fertilizers, a nitric phosphate process, liquid mixed fertilizers, formulation, granulation and coating, and major and trace elements in plant nutrition.

On Tuesday, Sept. 13, W. P. Martin, University of Minnesota, will address the luncheon of the Division of Fertilizer and Soil Chemistry on the status of knowledge of soil conditioners. C. H. Bailey, University of Minnesota, will speak before the Division of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, Sept. 14, on "The Role of the Chemist in the Evolution of the Cereal Food Industry."

In addition to the specialized program, agricultural and food chemists are likely to find papers of interest in the divisions of biochemistry, carbohydrate and organic chemistry, industrial and engineering chemistry, and many others.

About 6000 chemists and chemical engineers from over the United States are expected to attend the meeting, bringing together more members of this profession than any other meeting held this year.

Miller Pesticides Amendment

THE ANNIVERSARY of the passage of the Miller pesticides amendment passed on July 22. The situation on that date was not quite what had been expected by some of the optimistic backers of that piece of legislation. Both the administrative agencies and the industry members have gone through some difficult situations. What was hailed at the time of passage as a great thing for the industry, as well as a solution to the Government's problems of protection of the public health, became the object of cursing and hand-wringing at times. The problem of zero tolerances and the realization that a great deal of time is required to develop residue information caused a great many headaches. But as of the present, there is reason to hope that some of the difficulties are being overcome and valuable services can be performed through implementation of the new legislation.

There have been complications on both sides. For example, the FDA originally had in mind requiring residue data for various conditions of climate. Many industry members realized that thorough gathering of evidence for their products was not a quick or easy task. But the situation is in the process of shaking down through mutual cooperation. More time has been granted to industry and a few tolerances have been definitely set.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare recently has been through a trial by fire over matters of protection of the public health in the polio vaccine episode. The FDA can be expected to proceed with great caution and thoroughness in the present situation and its critics might be soothed by keeping this in mind.

Admittedly, meeting the requirements of the Miller amendment is costly, complicated, and time-consuming. But it seems that it presents a needed opportunity for industry. Pesticides have been very much put on the defensive during the past two years by publicity over relatively few toxicity problems. There has been a clamor for the requiring of proof of "harmlessness." Such a requirement is most unreasonable. The approach through the Miller amendment is one of proof of safety under conditions of use that might reasonably be expected. The definitions of those conditions are being rigorously examined, and once settled upon, should stand public scrutiny. Properly used, the Miller amendment could provide a welcome opportunity to present powerful evidence that the pesticides industry is operating under carefully developed and well founded evidence that it is not playing fast and loose with the public health and it is being refereed by a responsible public agency. All this places a great deal of responsibility on both the FDA and the industry to make the Miller amendment and its administration what it was intended to be.

Problems of public relations are not yet all solved for pesticides, but the value to technical agriculture of sound and effective operation of the Miller amendment may go far beyond mere permission to market pesticides.