



October 1958 Volume 6, No. 10

APPLIED JOURNALS, ACS

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430 Park Ave., New York 22, N. Y.
(For Branch Offices see page 782)

A Quarter-Century of Progress

AT ITS MEETING at Savannah, Ga., late this month, the National Agricultural Chemicals Association will celebrate its 25th anniversary. The people who worked so hard on the organization and successful launching of this association could hardly have foreseen, back in 1933, all of the problems and burdens that have since been thrust upon it, but their wisdom in setting up a strong association, capable of coping with whatever industry-wide problems might arise, has been repeatedly demonstrated.

Like the industry it serves, NAC has grown in size and strength. The association and its spokesmen have had much to do with establishing a real identity for an industry whose products may come from diverse sources, but have a relative singleness of purpose—the control of pests and diseases for the improvement of man's well-being.

Because the industry has gained identification, the NAC has acquired important responsibilities. These it has shouldered eagerly, and discharged effectively. And along with its own work in behalf of the industry as a whole, it has consistently encouraged individual action by industry members that will add to the stature of the companies themselves and the industry as a whole.

In its first quarter-century, the NAC has seen tremendous, often revolutionary, changes. Probably the most notable of these was the introduction of organic pesticides in the early 1940's, starting a research-based revolution that is still in progress.

The industry's tremendous growth in research has been matched by progress in the improvement of plant facilities and the establishment of safety measures in both the production and use of the industry's highly beneficial but often highly toxic products. Legislative problems have joined sales and promotional problems as chief targets for the NAC's constructive energies, and the development of sound public relations programs has become one of its major activities.

Along with changes in its products have come changes in public reactions and hence in the direction of much of its promotional effort. Twenty-five years and more ago, in the early period of the industry's development, it had to do a real sales job on the actual user of its products, the farmer. To sell a farmer 100 pounds of calcium arsenate meant educating him from the ground up on the benefits of chemical pest control. The sales job was effective. Good farmers everywhere now know the benefits of chemicals for agriculture; they eagerly accept new products and call for more.

In those early days there was little or none of the public criticism that is common today. Perhaps the salesman had to overcome some objection on the part of farmers to the idea that a "city slicker" could show them how to improve farm operation, but he met no opposition from the general public.

Today that situation is essentially reversed. The big problems no longer lie at the farm level. The job now is to sell city dwellers on the value of and the genuine need for good agricultural chemicals.

This is a problem to which the NAC and its staff are devoting increasing attention. They are making headway, but the battle is not easy. Emotions are involved. And history has shown that gaining victory over emotion through straightforward use of facts is, although eminently sound, often a rather slow process.

Since its inception, the NAC has built solidly and worked constructively in the public interest. We congratulate it on its record of achievement during its first 25 years. And we wish it continuing success in its efforts to advance agricultural chemistry—not merely for the benefit of the industry it represents, but for the betterment of the entire human race.