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In Diversity, Strength

IN AN INTROSPECTIVE mood, the American Chemical Society's Division of Agricultural and Food Chemistry has polled its members for guidance in plotting the division's future course. On the whole, the answers to its brief questionnaire have been heartening to its officers; ultimate result of the soul-searching may well be a rejuvenation, one of impressive dimensions.

Responses were received from over 400 of the division's members. In brief, they show that most members would make no major changes in the division's diverse make-up; while heterogeneity may have some disadvantages, the areas of common interest obviously are considered more important than the differences. As several respondents noted on their questionnaires, diversity can be a good thing.

As for programs, the hands-down favorite was a balanced combination of symposia and research papers, with principal emphasis on new developments. This again was essentially a vote of confidence in the policies already in force.

An unexpected by-product of the poll, and one which could prove to be its most important contribution, was the discovery that at least a score of the rank-and-file members would be willing to assume responsibility and take on work in the division's behalf. The officers are already moving to see that this potential energy is directed into useful and productive channels. The division—and therefore its members—will benefit. If past experience is a trustworthy yardstick, the greatest benefits will accrue to those who do serve, with profits in roughly direct proportion to input.

AG AND FOOD is pleased with the division's findings, and hopes that a new surge of achievement is in the making. As ACS President-Elect A. L. Elder pointed out at the division's luncheon meeting in Boston, the widely varied interests of its members make this division less closely knit than some others; even so, the individual activities of most of its members have the common objective of providing adequate supplies of food, feed, and fiber.

Thus, whether the individual's specific field of interest is pesticides, fertilizers, the direct processing of foods or feeds, or something less directly connected with the production and use of agricultural commodities, his work overlaps in varying degree with that of most of the others. While his own contributions may be made in an isolated segment, they are part of and essential to the solution of the over-all problem of providing better living for an expanding population.

As Elder concluded in his luncheon address, which is reproduced on page 313 of this issue, efforts must be dovetailed and a common meeting ground must be provided if future food requirements are to be met.

Many hands, many minds, and many disciplines are involved in the complicated process of moving foodstuffs from seed to plate. Many chemicals, many machines, many other tools assist the individuals who see that progress is maintained. None of those individuals works in a vacuum. Each ought to know at least something of what the others are doing. And to the extent that ideas are exchanged and talents are combined, progress will be accelerated.