

A STATEMENT OF EDITORIAL POLICY

It is now a little over six years since this journal, the first to be devoted exclusively to basic research in the lipid field, commenced publication. In the light of the experience gained during that time, it seems appropriate to describe in some detail the aims we started out with and the editorial policy which was evolved from our pursuit of those aims.

When a group of us proposed the founding of a lipid journal nearly ten years ago, we had many hesitations and doubts about the wisdom of taking such a step. There are always good reasons against starting another journal. One more periodical adds to the multitude of journals already being published, and there is necessarily an increased burden on readers' time and on libraries' budgets and space, as well as on the freely donated time of its editorial board. If it is a subspecialty journal, it tends to fragment the larger field, e.g., biochemistry, in which most of its subject matter also belongs. On the other hand, it is a great convenience for authors, research workers, and students to have a forum where a selection of the newest work in various aspects of a specialized field can be presented in one volume. We decided that in lipid research, at least, the convenience to the scientific community outweighed the possibly deleterious effects of fragmentation.

Various responsibilities fall on the founders of a new journal. Firstly, the readers must be offered scientifically sound, clear, and concise articles. Secondly, and sometimes in conflict with this, assistance must be tendered to authors, who desire rapid publication with the fewest possible impediments created by criticisms of experimental design and prose style. However, the journal's responsibilities to the field as a whole and to science generally may be even more important. Work should be published only when it is well-conceived, has been skillfully executed, and represents a significant advance in knowledge; anything less may contribute to confusion instead of to progress. On the other hand, reports con-

taining new and stimulating ideas should not be suppressed or unduly postponed simply because of objections to minor details.

The founders of the *Journal of Lipid Research* reasoned that it is a disservice to science, in the long run, to encourage the publication of work before it has been brought as near perfection as possible. A delay of several months during which the extra experiments suggested by reviewers are performed may save years of fruitless effort in other laboratories. The revision of a manuscript, undertaken in order to make the meaning crystal clear, not only saves the time of several thousand readers, but guards against the costly consequences of a misunderstanding. Considering their various responsibilities, then, the founders of the *Journal of Lipid Research* decided to aim for the highest possible editorial and refereeing standards.

We were advised by our wise and more experienced friends that the only way to achieve these standards was to select the strongest possible editorial board and then to encourage their giving every article a rigorous but fair review. We learned that strict reviewing is truly appreciated by most authors; only a few are deeply offended. We learned also that editors and reviewers are not infallible, and we have grown to expect our authors to point out our errors. We regret the delays caused by revisions, but after more than six years' experience we do not think our standards are unreasonably high. Indeed, we find that mature authors have come to expect and value the kind of detailed criticism we always aim to provide: comments from another scientist engaged in similar research who has a fresh eye for the author's work, and a painstaking, thorough checking of details by the Editorial Office to ensure that minor errors do not slip into print. Rigorous reviewing has brought some anguish, but also compensating satisfactions. Although there have been disappointments for authors, I believe that our policy has resulted in publication of highly reliable lipid

research literature in readily comprehensible form.

We have also striven for a pleasant format at the lowest possible subscription price. We have finally been forced by rising costs to increase this subscription price for the first time since 1959, but even our new rate is distinctly lower than most. At the same time, we are increasing our service by publishing bimonthly; this will reduce the average time between acceptance and publication from 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 4 months, although the *minimum* time of 3 months remains unchanged.

These meditations on the necessity for high ideals and for finding a dedicated group of scientists to put those ideals into practice have brought us once more to a

recognition of how much we owe to the 43 men who have served as members of our editorial board and to their many referees. In 1965, for instance, the 200 manuscripts received were carefully analyzed by at least one of the 21 present members of our editorial board (in this they were assisted by 160 outside reviewers) as well as by the Executive Editor and myself. We gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to these many scientists who give their time and offer their lifetime's experience in order to further lipid research; they receive in the normal course of events all too little overt appreciation.

E. H. AHRENS, JR.