

OIL & FAT INDUSTRIES

The Editor's Page

What Is a Chemist?

THE average employer of labor and brains, particularly an employer whose factory operations are sufficiently technical to require the services of chemical knowledge, is invited to pause long enough to give serious consideration to the nature and quality of the service which is rendered or can be rendered him by capable chemists.

Because no legal requirements have been established, any person at all may call himself a chemist and engage in the practice of "chemistry." There are probably many fakers posing as chemists today, men who are holding down their jobs through the ignorance of their employers. More plain unadulterated bunkum is dished up under the guise of chemistry than can be easily measured. Pseudo-scientists run rampant, with no curb upon their activities, except when they are given enough rope to hang themselves. This, however, is apt to prove an expensive means of obtaining their elimination, especially in a busy factory.

Many an employer has been deceived by fine-sounding polysyllabic chemical verbiage, only to discover later, to his sorrow, that he has hired a faker instead of a chemist. Employers who themselves are without chemical knowledge naturally fall easy prey to these so-called chemists. The results are frequently disastrous, particularly from the standpoint of public safety. Recommendations for procedure emanating from chemists possessing inadequate training or only superficial knowledge may and frequently do endanger the lives of employes and the safety of plant investments.

This condition has proven so detrimental to the progress of the earnest competent men who comprise the chemical profession that there have been frequent suggestions from leaders in the profession looking toward the sponsorship of legislation which would require the licensing of chemists by the various states after the manner in which doctors, dentists, lawyers pharmacists and others are now authorized to practice. The situation may be too complex to permit of such solution, but a step of the sort may eventually become necessary for the protection of employers and of sincere and qualified chemists.

Meanwhile, every employer has available a fitting test which he may apply when employing a chemist. If he desires to engage a beginner, let him require that the applicant be the holder of one or more degrees from a reputable college or university, one which has a satisfactory rating for chemical instruction. The ratings of colleges are readily obtainable from educational associations and foundations. If, on the other hand, the chemist to be employed is to be one with experience, the employer should inquire into the applicant's affiliations with Societies or Associations devoted to the study of his specialty. The faker always encounters exceeding difficulty in maintaining a position within the ranks of such groups of representative members of the profession.

A Test of Strength

THE forces which are struggling for and against increased Customs Duties on imported oils and fats, after prolonged skirmishing, engaged in a major action on the field of the Senate Floor on January 28, the outcome of the battle being decidedly in favor of the opponents of increased rates. The test of strength came in the form of a roll-call vote on an amendment proposed by Senator Thomas, (Rep.) of Idaho. Senator Thomas' proposal would have increased the duties on all oils to specific amounts which were the equivalent of 45% ad valorem, (55% in the case of linseed oil). The amendment was defeated by a vote of forty-nine to twenty-six. The Senators divided along sectional, rather than on party lines, most of the votes for the amendment coming from the agricultural regions, those against it being registered by Senators representing the industrial states. Thus we have the strange spectacle of two Democratic Senators from Georgia voting for higher tariff rates, while that High Priest of Protection, Senator Joseph R. Grundy, of Pennsylvania, voted against the increase.

The situation in the Senate in reference to duties on oils and fats was tersely and effectively described in the course of the debate by Senator Norris, (Rep.) of Nebraska, who