

A Step Forward

MOST national scientific organizations, after a period of initial growth, feel the need of local groups to further their work and aims. Advantages of local sections are that they provide readily accessible meetings, offer opportunity for a broader acquaintanceship among men and women faced with similar problems, and recruit members for the national society.

Attendance at our last six national meetings has averaged about 400. This figure means that each time not more than one out of five members has been able to attend, for one reason or another. Actually the ratio is less because a considerable number of non-members and guests are always present. Some of the 400 attend every meeting. They are executives or heads of departments who find our meetings invaluable because of the excellence of the papers and the opportunity to discuss technical matters with fellow experts.



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But what of the membership who scarcely ever attend an A.O.C.S. meeting unless it is practically next door? They often have tough problems to solve and could profit by the inspiration of open discussions. Technically trained men, who are on their own resources in the plant, particularly need such an avenue for exchange of information.

It is a mark of progress that the American Oil Chemists' Society has now opened the way for local sections. Up to this time we have had only two local oil groups in the United States which operated independently of the Society, one in the East and one in the West.

THE Northern California Oil Chemists, inspired by the San Francisco convention, was organized in 1951. I wish I could convey some idea of the enthusiasm of our first meeting, which has persisted so continuously that newcomers often comment on it. We believe this spirit can be maintained, not by relying entirely on imported speakers but by discussions capably led by members of our own group or others who are expert in their fields. There is a psychological basis for such a policy. People like to listen, but they prefer to

talk, especially if they have something important to say about their specialties. They are then contributors to the success of the meeting.

Attendance at meetings of the Northern California Oil Chemists varies from about 50 to 75 and represents approximately half of our membership. We have had no dues—just a dinner charge of \$4.00, which is sufficient to take care of the meal, tip, some liquid refreshment, and cost of sending out the notices. A number of employers have been so interested that they have paid the tab for their men.

When we first talked about organizing in California, we were frankly skeptical about the possibility of success as so many organizations were already in existence. It seemed that a new one would have to fight for sufficient membership and attendance to keep going. We were agreeably surprised that, on the contrary, the idea was immensely popular. A contributing factor has been our policy of keeping organization and business detail to a minimum so that more time can be devoted to technical discussions.

We have arbitrarily defined our area as extending northward through the state from Fresno. There are no oil chemists in this state farther north than Sacramento. During the first two years we operated under the direction of a steering committee, but under a local section charter we shall doubtless have officers. Membership so far has not been rigorously defined in our California group. Meetings have been open to all who were interested. But hereafter membership will be a matter of application and approval by the steering committee although others will be welcome to attend. To avoid carrying dead weight on our rolls we have adopted a policy of dropping from membership those who fail to attend for three consecutive meetings without adequate reason.

IN the United States on the basis of geographical distribution of members, it would seem that there is justification for at least 12 local sections of the A.O.C.S., as follows: Georgia, Wisconsin-Illinois, Minnesota, New York-New Jersey, Ohio, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Tennessee-Kentucky, eastern Texas, New England, southern California, and northern California. In some of these areas the dispersion of members would necessitate some travel, but it is our experience that this difficulty is no deterrent to attendance at meetings. Several of our members travel 200 miles.

It should be well worth the effort for any fat and oil group to attempt organization—at least to call together an informal gathering of oil chemists in an area and sound out their real sentiment on the subject.

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