

Challenges for chemical industries

Continuing worldwide inflation, more governmental involvement in business, decreasing raw materials, and expensive energy and petrochemicals are four major challenges facing the chemical industry around the globe, Rudolf W. Knoepfel told the Chemical Industry Association, Inc., in New York earlier this year.

Knoepfel is president of The Solvay American Corporation and of the North American Society for Corporate Planning, but emphasized that his talk outlined his personal opinions, not necessarily those of either organization he heads.

A continuing "worldwide economy of considerable uncertainty, unemployment, instability, and inflation" should be viewed by the chemical industry as an opportunity to capitalize on the industry's reservoir of technical and marketing know-how, Knoepfel said.

With a minority of the world's population living in free societies, chemical firms can look forward to "more government contacts, influence and regulations," he said, probably involving business deals with firms in many countries "although we may not exactly like the color of their political vests."

Knoepfel warned that there may never again be a "normal" situation for raw materials as producing nations band together for economic strength. "Another clear trend is that producer countries will more and more insist on upgrading raw materials in their countries to semifinished or even finished products," he said.

High-energy costs are now a fact of life with the long-term depletion of oil, coal, and shale inevitable, he said. The chemical industry "will increasingly have to rely on natural resources" for organic chemicals, with such resources to center on wood and similar plant materials.

"Our chemical processes are very energy intensive and, if compared to natural biological processes, quite crude," Knoepfel said. "The chemical industry will, more and more, develop and learn to use biological processes involving bacteria, enzymes, etc."

Increasing world population with attendant social and political plus rapid technological advances and accelerating changes point toward basic changes in the world order, he said.

"The events of the past few years and the persistence of the unwelcome trinity of global inflation, recurrent material shortages, and the huge increase in oil prices imposed by the OPEC cartel, together with widespread economic crises and massive unemployment, have resulted in sharp shifts of economic and political power which are creating a new global industrial environment, which has not only profoundly modified the fields of economic power between industrial countries and poor countries, but also between the 'have-nots' themselves," he said.

Knoepfel described his talk as a scenario—a picture of possible events based on certain assumptions and educated guesses and, by definition, highly speculative. He specifically said his comments should not be regarded as "forecasts."

Quality control course this month

A three-day course on "Process Analysis—Crash Without Crisis" will be held April 20-22, 1977, by the Chicago Section of the American Society for Quality Control at the Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge in Palatine, IL.

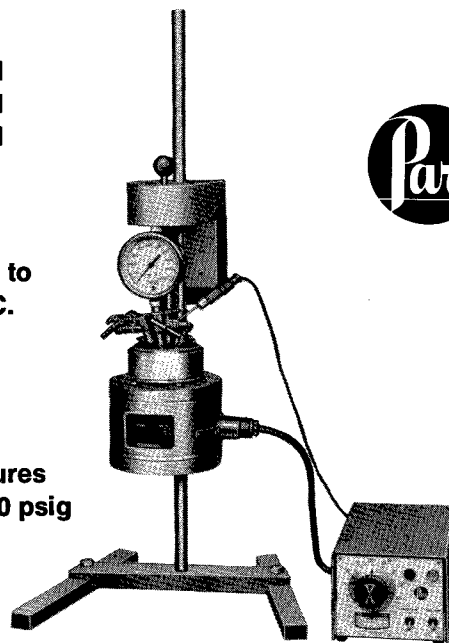
Three major subject areas will be covered: review of fundamental quality principle; on-line troubleshooting; and process improvement/product development. The course is worth 2.8 continuing education units. Further information is available from William E. Booth, D-97B, Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, IL (tele: 312-688-0472). Fee is \$225 for ASQC members, \$250 for nonmembers.

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850 attend SDA meeting

Approximately 850 persons attended The Soap and Detergent Association's 50th Annual Meeting and Industry Convention in Boca Raton, Florida, this past January.

Jay VanAndel, chairman of the board for Amway Corp., was re-elected chairman and chief executive officer for The SDA during the convention. Thomas Laco, group vice president for Procter & Gamble, was re-elected vice-chairman. Other officers re-elected were Theodore E. Brenner, president, secretary and chief operation officer; Robert C. Singer, vice-president; and Frazier M. Hancock, Duveen Soap Corp., treasurer.

AOCS member Allen H. Howland of the Original Bradford Soap Works Inc. of Argo, IL, was re-elected to the board of directors.

Among speakers at the meeting were George W. McKinney Jr. of Irving Trust Co. on "Money Matters—Here and Abroad"; Richard C. Hottel, CBS News, "Behind the International Headlines"; Rene Carlotti, Shell International, "Detergent Raw Material Trends in Western Europe"; William C. Griffin, ICI United States, "Surface Active Agents from Fatty Acids"; Anthony C. Savitsky, Procter & Gamble Co., "Utilization of Type A Ziolite as a Detergent Builder"; Janes S. Wilson, editor of "Of Consuming Interest," "The Corporation and the Consumer"; Glenn E. Schweitzer, EPA, "The Toxic Substances Control Act: New Perspectives, Challenges and Opportunities"; Gen. Wallace H. Robinson Jr., GSA Federal Supply Service, "New Trends in Government Procurement Practices"; and S. John Byington, chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, "CPSC: What It Is . . . Where It Is Going."

The 51st annual SDA meeting has been set for Jan. 26-29, 1978, also at the Boca Raton Hotel and Club in Boca Raton, Florida. Registration information is available from The SDA, 475 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.