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EDITORIAL

REFINING CRUDE COTTONSEED OIL

An article which should be of great interest to oil chemists and refiners is published in this number on the refining test for crude Cottonseed Oil, giving some results of a scientific study of a very troublesome problem; one that has given a vast amount of trouble to the buyers and sellers of crude oil. Additional data is expected to be published later.

The first attempt to formulate a definite method for refining tests dates back to about 1900, when representatives of various large refining interests met in Chicago and agreed on a method of procedure. In those days secrecy was the watchword throughout the cotton oil industry, and therefore the details of the method then adopted were not published in full; but the Interstate rules stated that instructions in the method would be given to those needing same, by certain designated chemists.

Some years later a committee of the Society of Cotton Products Analysts (now the American Oil Chemists Society) wrote up a method for making these tests which was published in their official methods of analysis, substantially like the present official method.

The American Oil Chemists Society has always had a committee endeavoring to so improve details of this procedure as to result in more concordant results by different chemists, but without making much progress, owing to lack of opportunity and facilities for a sufficiently intensive study of the problem. Wide differences are still reported frequently by different referee and other chemists working on identical samples of crude.

When we compare the wonderfully close results in analyzing cottonseed meal, obtained these days by different chemists, with the status of this work twenty years ago, and remember that this improvement resulted solely from a careful, scientific study of the problem, it is hardly conceivable that a decided improvement cannot be made in refining tests if this problem also is attacked in a proper scientific manner. Refining tests now stand about where meal tests stood twenty years ago, as regards reliability and consistency. As far as we are aware, this is the first intensive effort to discover the causes of such troublesome differences in these analyses, and much good must ultimately come from work of this kind.