
Editorial

Methods of Operation of The A. O. C. S.

THE American Oil Chemists' Society, originally known as the Society of Cotton Products Analysts, was organized because of a pressing need for uniform methods for the evaluation of the products manufactured by the cotton oil industry. Disagreements between various laboratories were the rule rather than the exception. Consequently the principal problem of the newly formed organization was to undertake cooperative work on suggested methods, in order to obtain a standard procedure which would enable different laboratories to check each other on identical samples. This has been a long and difficult procedure, but has been crowned with considerable success, as indicated by the comparative lack of disagreements between laboratories at the present time.

When the Society of Cotton Products Analysts became the American Oil Chemists' Society their interests expanded to include all of the fields into which animal or vegetable fats and oils entered. As a result our methods now include those applicable to the entire field and our study of methods has been broadened to the same extent. It may readily be seen that under these circumstances a large number of committees, each one of which is studying some specific method, are required.

The way in which these various committees function may be of interest to our readers. Several years ago it was decided to have a central committee, known as the Uniform Methods and Planning Committees, which would supervise, advise, and in some cases initiate investigation of methods. This committee consists of five members, each one of whom is particularly interested and experienced in certain lines of fat and oil chemistry. After the various committees have been appointed by the president, the chairman of the Planning Committee divides them into groups, apportioning each group for supervision to the member of his committee most experienced in that line. It then becomes the duty of this member of the Uniform Methods and Planning Committees to keep in touch with the chairmen of the group of committees under his supervision in order to keep the work going with as little delay as possible and help them with suggestions. When the committee's work has been completed a report is written up and presented to the Uniform Methods and Planning Committee who study it critically and comment upon it at the next meeting of the society, making such recommendations of approval or disapproval as they feel are warranted under the circumstances. If a method has been worked out to the point where the various collaborators are able to get concurrent results on like samples, the Uniform Methods and Planning Committee recommend its adoption as a tentative method. In this way it can be tried out by the Society at large and discussed at the next meeting of the Society. Before a method can be adopted as an official method of the Society it must have been recommended as a tentative method for at least a year. This enables the members to try out the method for a considerable period of time and to bring in their suggestions or objections either in writing or by discussion on the floor at the convention.

At the present time the Soap Division of the Society have committees who are studying general methods of soap

analysis, glycerine analysis and the evaluation of detergents. The division particularly interested in cottonseed products are studying the evaluation of color in oils, methods of refining, the determination of moisture, crude mill operations, the analysis of cottonseed, and the determination of moisture in cottonseed cake and meal. The question of sampling is divided to some extent. One committee has been interested and has done a very fine piece of work on better methods of sampling crude cottonseed oil. The Fat Analysis Committee is interested in the sampling of all types of animal fats and oils and is likewise interested in the general subject of analytical methods of these products. Another committee is investigating methods for the analysis of miscellaneous oils and has done considerable work within the last several years in the development of accurate methods for determining the purity of olive oil.

In addition to the above committees, the Referee Board is charged with the selection and approval of referee chemists of the American Oil Chemists' Society who are deemed competent to analyze all of the products covered by the Society, or certain portions of them. In the first case they are granted a referee certificate covering all products, and in the second instance they are given limited certificates, which define the products in which the referee is deemed competent.

The Journal Committee is particularly interested in the building up of the Journal and very carefully scans the types of papers submitted for publication before turning them over to the publishers.

A very important and rather unique activity of the Society is the check meal work which has been carried on for many years. This was originated by the late Dr. Frank Smalley, formerly Chief Chemist of the Southern Cotton Oil Company and in commemoration of his service is known as the "Smalley Foundation." The participants in this work are furnished with a series of thirty check meal samples during the fall and winter months, on which they are requested to determine the nitrogen and fat content. The reports are mailed weekly to the chairman of this committee, who determines the fair average and reports regularly to each participant. Each analyst is designated by number only, this number being known to himself alone. Prizes are given for the best results and the general accuracy has been raised to an almost unbelievable degree since the inception of this work.

While the chairman of each committee is permitted to select its personnel, any member of the Society can take part in any of this work if he so desires. The methods of the Society represent the best procedure that has been developed up to the present time, but there is still a great deal of work to be done and suggestions and assistance by those who are interested are gladly received.

The annual meeting of the Society is usually held in May at the same place selected by the National Cottonseed Products Association. During the past six years a fall meeting has been held in the east or middle west. Up until last year methods could only be received and passed upon at the annual meeting in the spring. Now, however, this can also be done at the fall meeting. At these meetings the reports of the committees are read and papers of general interest to the fat and oil industry are presented.

April 27, 1933.

J. J. VOLLERTSEN.