

## The Meaning of Referee Certification -- *by Our Society*

IN THE EYES of the law and of industry a referee is one to whom a dispute is referred so that he may settle it. Sponsorship of a system of referees is usually just one part of a broad provision of rules for settling disputes. The system of so-called referee chemists of the American Oil Chemists' Society is unusual in that the sponsoring agency is not responsible for the trading rules under which these chemists are supposed to act as referees.



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Appropriately the constitution and by-laws of the Society provide only for Active Referee Members, not for appointment of referee chemists. But the approved applicant is given a certificate which, without conferring any title, declares that he is "qualified to act as referee chemist." Thereafter he is traditionally called a referee chemist throughout the Society and the industry.

There is considerable justification for this pretense of appointment of referee chemists by the Society. Applications for the appointment are prompted mainly by the fact that both the National Cottonseed Products Association and the National Soybean Processors' Association require that their Official Chemists first obtain a referee certificate from the Society. As Official Chemists of a trade association, our Active Referee Members actually perform referee work and have a preferred position with respect to much other settlement work.

The sole excuse for our whole referee system is service to industry. Let us look critically at this service—past, present, and future. Before referee chemists in our field had any official status, the first Referee Board of the Society was appointed for the purpose of investigating the qualifications of available chemists to act as referees on cottonseed products. After many changes in the technical status of the referees during the succeeding 30 years, the only essential service which our Referee Board is now rendering to industry today is the same as that of the original committee, passing judgment on the qualifications of would-be referee chemists for the oil-seed crushing industry. A new arrangement for performing this one duty is the only readjustment which would be needed by industry if the Society should suddenly abolish Active Referee membership and the Referee Board.

THE appointment of Active Referee Members, although not now important in itself, might be useful in the future as a framework for appointment of referees on products not now covered by any referee certification. For example, it has been recently suggested that the Society issue referee certificates on tallow and grease. This suggestion is worthy of study, but perhaps a more basic question of policy should be considered first. In the field of oil-seed crushing the trade associations are leaving to our Society leadership on laboratory methods and on selection of the chemists qualified as referees, and we are leaving to the trade associations leadership in the fixing of all the trading rules, including those for the official grading of products. Such mutual deference is a very fine thing when it stems from the fact that each group has historically assumed and continues to meet certain definite responsibilities. Whether or not we will defer in the same degree to trade organizations generally is a basic question which the Society should be considering.

If experience on cottonseed and soybean products is the proper guide for our general behavior, some trade association or closely related group will have to sponsor a uniform grading system and other trading rules for tallow and grease before the Society can give really effective referee certification on this class of products: Who will furnish the leadership needed to win general acceptance of a system of trading in these products? Will the leadership come from the packers, the renderers, the soap manufacturers, or some exchange? At present, these are not promising sources. Why not leadership by our Society? Independent technical societies have been known to propose specifications and grades for commercial products, which buyers and sellers and even whole trade associations gladly adopted as a basis of trading. Moreover our Society is the organization in which the various buyers and sellers of the animal fats work together in greatest harmony.

Through its regular activity, especially standardization of analytical methods, the Society is already providing most of the support which it can give to sound trading in tallow and grease by mere contact between buyer and seller. Referee certification on these products might give a little more help, but many of us believe that what we really need is a uniform grading system and a generally accepted set of trading rules.

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