

The Technical Correspondent's Mail

LUANDA, Portuguese West Africa; Monterey, Mexico; Karachi, Pakistan; and Grand Island, Nebraska, are postmarks on mail forwarded to the technical correspondent of the American Oil Chemists' Society.

Large industries and small ones, corporations and individuals, food manufacturers, cosmetic and soap manufacturers, rendering works, packinghouses, academicians, and the Army of the United States all write to the American Oil Chemists' Society for advice or information on a variety of subjects.

From January 1, 1950, to January 1, 1951, the technical correspondent received almost 80 inquiries, of which about half were from residents of the United States. The remainder were from foreign sources. Letters have been received from Argentina, Angola, Mexico, Cuba, New Zealand, Malaya, Pakistan, Columbia, Turkey, Greece, England, Algeria, China, Belgium, India, Italy, Palestine, and Egypt.



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The list is impressive and should serve to convince anyone in doubt that the American Oil Chemists' Society is an important part of the oil industries, both at home and abroad. It should be a source of satisfaction to those who recall the day in May, 1909, when a small group of men founded the organization. It should encourage those who have a vision of our organization which will serve all the ramifications of the oil industry to the fullest extent and who hope to see its Journal the mouthpiece and public forum for all who are concerned with the chemistry and technology of fats and oils.

The inquiries which come to the technical correspondent are varied. Some can be answered directly, but many must be referred to those of the membership who are more expert in the particular field of the inquiry. In many cases we have been able to direct attention toward the services or products of our advertisers, to their advantage, we hope.

Occasionally we must refuse a request, if the information asked for is in the secret files of certain of our members. We try not to embarrass those individuals by asking them to divulge it. In such cases we may suggest that one of the many chemical consultants who advertise in the Journal be employed to solve the problem.

WE do not make extensive searches for information which may be found in the literature. We try to indicate to the questioner the sources which he may then consult himself. We even try to make contacts with representatives of various phases of the industry for members and others who are visitors from abroad.

The technical service is operated without cost to the Society, except for that of stationery and other supplies. The technical consultant, who is a member of the staff of the Journal, is appointed by the chairman of the Journal Committee.

The large percentage of foreign mail, which seems to be increasing, is probably due to the lack of available trained scientific personnel in the industries involved. Lack of library facilities may also be a factor. It is to be noted that none of the countries behind the "Iron Curtain" is represented in the list of inquirers (China was not one of these during the time covered in this report). This fact need not be taken however as evidence that our Journal is not known and appreciated in these countries.

THE scope of the technical correspondent's mail shows clearly that our Society is known and respected all over the world. This fact presents us with both an opportunity and a responsibility. With the growth of its influence and prestige go the opportunity and responsibility of the Society to serve all segments of the oil industry to the fullest extent. If all segments are not adequately served, no segment will be properly served. A case in point is the rapidly growing fatty-acid industry. This industry, which utilizes fats as raw materials for the manufacture of new chemical products, is already of multi-million dollar proportions. As the use of fats and oils in this manner increases, more fats and oils must be produced on the farms and plantations, and more must be processed in our mills and packinghouses. New problems of production and processing will arise which must be solved by members of our Society.

The new industry itself requires the answers to many questions which may be supplied, to our advantage, by the industrial and academic laboratories represented among our membership. Scientists trained in this new area are required and should be supplied by our universities and colleges. The growth of this industry affects profoundly, but not necessarily adversely, the soap and cosmetic industries since it produces new products useful in these fields. Even the cotton and soybean producers may feel its influence through the agency of new insecticides, which may become an important factor in agriculture.

It is quite possible that other new and great industries utilizing fats and oils will arise, and all should be served by our society. Your technical correspondent feels that the oils and fats industry is not divisible and that the best interests of each part are best served when the interests of every other part are properly considered.

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