

The A.O.C.S. and the Edible Fat Industry: *Our Changing Responsibilities*

OUR SOCIETY has made many outstanding contributions to the edible fats industry. In fact, it has become in many ways an essential component of the industry. This commentary could justifiably be limited to praising the Society for its many accomplishments; however it should be more constructive to use the space in appraising some areas of the Society's activities where it appears further progress can be and should be made.



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According to our directory's historian, Warren H. Goss, the present Society was formally organized in 1910 under the name of the *Society of Cotton Products Analysts*. The initial objectives of the Society were to standardize analytical methods and to enhance the accuracy and dependability of chemical analysis. The present name of our Society was adopted in 1920, thus effectively opening the door to all chemists interested in fats and oils. Since that time the major emphasis of the Society as an organization has continued to be on improved analytical techniques. However, probably because of the opportunities afforded by the annual meetings and the *Journal*, our Society has become the sounding board for all phases of research and development in fats and oils. Consequently our membership now includes people with a wide variety of scientific, engineering, and other technical backgrounds.

When we organized in 1910, we voluntarily assumed certain responsibilities, primarily in the area of analysis; with our growth both in numbers and influence we have inherited many additional responsibilities. To these we have given varying degrees of official recognition and positive action, but in at least three areas more could be done.

FIRST, we should broaden the organization of the Society to provide more opportunities for participation by members who are not engaged in analytical chemistry. The preponderance of our committees pertain to some phase of analysis. This, of course, is natural in a Society with a history such as ours. And in the face of this our governing boards and presidents and committee chairmen have succeeded in placing quite a number of non-analytical people on committees. Nonetheless one who is not an analytical chemist could develop a degree of frustration in looking for ways in which he could actively participate in the Society organization. It is hoped that the local sections will help fill this need.

Second, we should make a greater effort to interest more university laboratories in our Society and in carrying research programs in fats and oils. In our *Journal* last year only 13% of the papers emanated from U. S. university laboratories and 8% from foreign universities; in comparison (or contrast), in *Food Technology*, U. S. university laboratories contributed 41% of the papers. We seriously need greater academic support because both our supply of fundamental knowledge and our supply of trained manpower are totally inadequate. Further, greater academic participation would lend added prestige to the scientific stature of our Society.

Third, we should take a more responsible interest in the end-use of our edible products. It is possible that far too many of us believe that after the edible fat is in its shipping container, our responsibility ends. We concern ourselves so much with improved analytical techniques, better engineering, more economical processes, and merchandising gimmicks that we seem to lose sight of the fact that, after all, we are producing a food product. Therefore it should be just as important to us as a Society that our products be wholesome and nutritious as that they be flavorless and plastic. Whenever one of our convention programs has a paper or symposium on the nutritional aspects of fats, our lack of interest is usually apparent from the small size of the audience.

The wholesomeness of our products is being challenged on at least two fronts today, that is, the effect of fats in the diet on the incidence of atherosclerosis, and the edibility of heated fats. The industry and the consuming public that we serve could be seriously wronged by a "bad press" that improperly interprets reports based on inadequate data or which have ambiguous or misleading conclusions. We would not be accepting our full responsibility as scientists if we did not face these challenges directly. Our Society should be in the forefront in developing and disseminating the facts in these two and other important areas of research on the value of fats as foods.

We repeat that because of its nature our Society has inherited many major responsibilities. Ours is the one technical Society to which the edible fat industry looks for guidance. The degree to which we assume our responsibilities to our members, to our industry, and to the consuming public will certainly greatly affect the future of our industry and our status as a technical society.

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