

Executive director reports to AOCS membership

The following was delivered by James Lyon, AOCS executive director, to the AOCS membership at the 64th Annual Spring Meeting in New Orleans.

Two years ago, when Steve Chang introduced me in Houston, I said that speeches can often be rated in inverse proportion to their length. I hope that what follows is excellent.

What I propose to do here is present my view—biased though it may be—of the changes that have occurred since the Society's move to Champaign and list a few of our accomplishments and current projects to give you a better idea of what we have done and hope to do with you.

Obviously, I represent a change myself. In fact, for the past 2 years, you have been served by a new staff. Only Sully Gaskins remains from the Chicago days. No one else made the move. Their reasons were good and valid, though any and all were welcome to move. Many helped in the transition by aiding in the training of a new staff who knew little about technical societies and nothing about the ways of oil chemists.

I mention staff changes because, if I can take personal credit for any of the positive events of these 2 years, it is that I hired the people who do so much of the work you see; and I have tried to use enough good sense to let them do these things, which fortunately quite often make me look pretty good. We are fortunate to have such competent people working for AOCS.

There was no doubt some apprehension about the decision to move from the Society's old home in Chicago and to buy a new headquarters building. I assure you, however, that the minutes show careful analysis of the problems and opportunities and that the calculations clearly reflect the long range advantages of the move. This is not the place for a lengthy, detailed analysis; nor is it necessary to rehash the calculations. It is obvious that the possible long term effects of the decisions were carefully considered and that the future is bright.

But what about the short term? How has it worked for the first 2 years?

In 1971, the Society lost nearly \$50,000. Much of that loss—say \$30,000 to \$35,000—was related to the move. As the treasurer has reported, in 1972 income exceeded expenditures by nearly \$21,000 for a total turn-around of over \$70,000 in a single year. This was achieved in spite of added maintenance and utilities costs, and \$21,500 principal and interest payments on the mortgage—somewhat more than the \$13,500 occupancy expenses the Society last paid in Chicago. When the mortgage debt is retired in a maximum of 8 years, things will be brighter, especially if we are successful in our efforts to lease excess space in the building.

To have achieved this financial about-face in 1 year, it is obvious that some economies were effected. Let me list a few major ones: (1) Salaries decreased 10% from Chicago costs 2 years earlier. (2) Legal and audit costs dropped 60%. (3) In spite of more mailings and more elaborate designs of

mailers, printing costs have been reduced by 20%.

In such an inflationary economy, it is obvious that these savings must be the direct result of the move. Then, too, we have tried to be as efficient and economical as possible in the ways we use your dollars. We try hard not to spend any more than is necessary and justifiable.

So much for the finances of the move. Let me list some specific things we have done in the last 2 years.

Our first efforts were directed to changing our accounting system from an outdated cash system to an accrual basis, to help the Governing Board keep better informed about where the money goes. Through this, we have developed a far better budgeting system, which will lend itself to the Finance Committee's efforts at long range planning.

We are trying to publish *JAOCS* and *Lipids* as rapidly and as professionally as possible. The mailing schedules have been moved up by 3 weeks and this year even the December index issues were mailed on time. Now, virtually every domestic member and subscriber should be receiving *JAOCS* in the month of issue.

We have also tried to dress up the inside of *JAOCS* without increasing production costs. The publication department has experimented with new layouts in the news section and, we feel, the journal is more attractive as a result of their work. I hope you agree.

Then, too, the staff has taken responsibility for the in-house composition of all of *JAOCS* and *Lipids*, utilizing our own equipment.

Last year phone numbers were added to the Directory of Membership. This year we will change production methods to coordinate our Directory and member-subscriber lists. This will ultimately result in lower costs, faster production and a more useful publication.

For the past 5 years AOCS membership has been declining. Through the President's Club and Honor Roll, we have asked you to help reverse this trend by recruiting your nonmember colleagues. So far you have been somewhat successful. In 1971, 80 new members were approved at the spring meeting. In 1972, there were 117. This year 246 applications will be considered by the Membership Committee. (Note: At this writing, the figure is approaching 350 new member applications for the year.) And, if all of you who haven't yet qualified for the President's Club get busy, we'll do even better at the fall meeting in Chicago.

We are also trying to promote more widely and earlier AOCS national meetings and short courses. Are you aware that you can now register for next spring's meeting in Mexico City? (Note: Detailed information is available from: Executive Director, AOCS, 508 South Sixth St., Champaign, Ill. 61820.)

These are some of our accomplishments—some of the changes we have tried. Of course, we also answer the phone, write letters and take coffee breaks.

Additional projects are underway. For 18 months we have worked on a meetings manual revision. We are planning an annual reports section in *JAOCS* to inform the readers of the work of AOCS committees. We are looking for new and better ways to enhance communication with the membership. We are in the midst of producing, in-house, the first AOCS monograph—a work on tumor lipids.

This report has probably gone beyond the "excellence" length. I hope I have given you some idea of the activity that has been and is taking place in the Society.

I also said in Houston that I hoped my term as executive director will see the Society move forward and that with your help it would. That still holds true. We need your prodding, your ideas, your advice. It is your Society, not the staff's. It will be what you make it. We are here to help.

Come visit us in Champaign when you are in the neighborhood. ■