



Greetings from AIS

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Two years ago, at the General Assembly of the AIS in Copenhagen, Mr. Lyon informed us about a plan to organize a World Conference on Soaps and Detergents, and asked for our cooperation. To tell you quite frankly, we were not certain at that time that such a manifestation would be successful.

Today, with more than 600 participants in this conference, doubts are not permitted any more! The reason for this success can also be attributed to the choice of the themes that will be under discussion and to which our association has been happy to contribute.

It is also a privilege to meet here in Montreux personalities not only from industry circles, but also from research centers, academia, and government agencies on both national and international levels.

Such a confrontation of so diversified interests is certainly useful from time to time. The problems we are facing today are of such a complex nature that it has become impossible to live in splendid isolation. Discussions between all interested parties have become indispensable.

I take advantage of this opportunity to tell you in a few words the role the AIS is playing in the general effort to keep all responsible government institutions and agencies informed about the viewpoint or position of the industry.

How does the Association Internationale de la Savonnerie, AIS, work?

In today's Western Europe it has become a rule that neither the European Common Market nor the EFTA countries want to talk to individual companies and only consider the national or international federations as their discussion counterpart.

The AIS, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, is an international federation of national associations, representing the soaps and detergents industry. It groups all national associations of Western Europe, and even at this moment extends its activities to other continents like Oceania.

Individual companies can also be members of the AIS via a representative national association in the soaps and detergents field, and in this way about 800 companies are actually concerned with the actions of the AIS. The turnover in soaps and detergents realized by the effective members of the AIS (Western Europe) was about 180 billion Belgian francs or roughly five billion dollars during 1976. Mr. Costa, General Secretary of the AIS, will, in his paper, give details on the development of this segment of industry during the past 5 years. This will give a picture of its dynamism and creativeness.

As to the objectives of the association, the most important ones are:

1. to examine all questions relating to the industries concerned with soaps, detergents, and kindred products;
2. to promote the common interests and the knowledge of the industry represented by its member associations;

3. more particularly, to seek collective solutions to problems of common concern relating to human and environmental health;

4. to represent the member associations in dealing with competent supranational official or professional bodies on all occasions when combined action is judged to be necessary;

5. to cooperate, as far as possible, with supranational authorities in the preparation of regulations which could affect the activities of the industry which it represents;

6. to provide guidance for the member associations by its recommendations;

7. to collect, exchange, and disseminate all information necessary for the achievement of its objectives; and — here is something well known to our American friends: for the achievement of its objectives, the association will avoid the adoption of any measures restrictive of free competition between the firms represented by the member associations.

How to become a member of the AIS

The AIS has effective and associate members. The term "associate member" is not of discriminating nature, which results from Art. 6, which reads as follows:

"Organizations may be admitted to membership if they meet the following conditions:

1. They must consist of groups of industrial firms operating in the field of soaps, detergents, and kindred products, and they must have as their aim the protection of their common interests;

2. they must be representative of the industrial section defined in their constitutions.

Groups may be admitted as associate members if they are able to contribute to the pursuit of the objectives of the association as defined in Art. 2. However, such groups are not entitled to a vote. The basis of their participation in the work of the association is a matter for decision by the Executive Committee."

What are the activities of the AIS?

The AIS follows work of the international organizations dealing with problems concerning the protection of the environment, the protection and information of the consumer, and other questions concerning directly or indirectly the soaps and detergents industry.

The AIS especially deals with matters of water, air, waste, and more particularly, with those concerning biodegradability and the marketing conditions of chemical substances and preparations.

The AIS studies the standardization of test methods and product safety.

Organization

There is a general assembly which meets once a year.

The Executive Committee (Board of Directors) consists of representatives of each national association. A Special Committee consists of the president, two vice-presidents, the treasurer, and the commission presidents. This committee has the task to execute the decisions taken by the general assembly, and to make suggestions to the Executive Committee according to circumstances which prevail at that moment.

For specific problems, the AIS has three basic committees: the Technical Commission, the Economic and Social Commission, and the Commission of Interfirm Relations.

For specific projects, each commission has specialized working groups at its disposal. Among the activities of these specialized working groups are such activities as:

1. The elaboration of methods for determining biodegradability of anionics and nonionics.
2. Studies of eutrophication.
3. Study of control procedures for chemicals before marketing.
4. Various studies of safety in use of washing and cleaning products.
5. Studies of aquatic toxicology of surface agents and other ingredients contained in washing products.
6. Studies of detection methods, in surface water, of surface agents and other ingredients contained in soap and detergent products.
7. Updating an inventory of international and national laws, directly or indirectly concerning washing and cleaning products.
8. Study of any development concerning safety criteria and test methods to ensure that the ingredients used in toilet soaps are "safe."
9. In collaboration with anti-poison centers, collecting of data on the accidental ingestion of products of the soap and detergent industry.
10. Elaboration of standards for pre-packages considering the possibilities of new packaging materials.

The coordination of all this is in the hands of Mr. Costa, General Secretary, who has at his disposal a multilingual team which is in charge of the dissemination of information either by special circulars or by information bulletins which are sent out on a bimonthly basis. This secretariat has also been entrusted with the elaboration of specific subjects or studies.

I hope I have been able to explain this European profes-

sionally organized association in its present stage, created by industry and functioning as we wanted it to right from the start.

It has not been easy to affect the cohesion and cooperation needed among so many countries and so many different national interests and problems, but finally the companies became aware of the fact that they could not stand alone any more, and that, when matters had to be settled, it would be preferable to do it through an organization equipped to do the job.

Thanks to the permanent staff of the general secretary, the organization which has been built up during the years, has not only been accepted by the European countries and government agencies as a valid discussion partner, but is also recognized as maybe one of the most competent and best organized ones. It also has the reputation of being able to reach a decision, a kind of action apparently so difficult for international organizations! The best yardsticks are the results achieved in a variety of areas, and I must say without false modesty that the tangible results have been considerable. Nothing is more difficult than for a professional organization to prove the need for its existence and its work to line management. We have no illusions on this point and we are making headway slowly, hoping not to die on the bridge!

Representatives of the AIS are at your disposal for any supplementary information you might want. Besides the permanent staff of the general secretary (Miss Baptista and Mrs. Vermeesch) you will have the opportunity to meet various directors of the national associations, the presidents of the Economic and Social Commission (Mr. de Jong), and of the Technical Commission (Mr. Thiernagand), as well as presidents of the working groups.

I wish all of you a week of fruitful exchange of information and discussions. The choice of subjects which will be developed, the quality of speakers and the confidence of people here in the hall will assure that this conference will be beneficial to all participants.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the Swiss Union of Soaps and Detergents, which has been selected by the AIS to be the European link vis-a-vis our friends in the U.S.

I also express my gratitude and congratulations to the American Oil Chemists' Society for a job well done.

Again, I wish you all a most interesting and pleasant stay in the beautiful city of Montreux.

