

Editorial—Short Communications

PROGRESS IN POLYMER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY owes much to close research collaboration between industrial and academic institutions. Polymer scientists have been more ready than most to pursue research programmes tailored to the economic needs of industry and so, indirectly, to those of society. This inbred perception of commercial reality has done much also to foster acceptance of commercially-published, high quality, specialist journals such as POLYMER. Flexible and quick to respond to changing patterns of research, this journal stands today as an internationally acknowledged leader in the field.

As POLYMER approaches its 20th anniversary, it is pertinent to review its past and future roles. The early years of POLYMER coincided with steadily expanding research budgets; considerable industrial resources were devoted to innovative synthetic chemistry in the hope of discovering new, high-tonnage polymers. From the late 1960s, however, economic constraints gradually enforced a change in emphasis. The search for new materials was abandoned with industry channelling its now scarce resources into efforts to improve those commercially profitable polymers which were already available. Of utmost importance in this research was the study of the interrelationship between chemical structure and bulk physical and mechanical properties. Throughout the 1970s, this change in emphasis has continued to catalyse vigorous and expanding activity in the field of polymer physics and, later, in polymer engineering. During this period, POLYMER has won an international reputation for excellence as an archival journal for full length papers and for reviews of lasting usefulness.

In planning the development of POLYMER for the 1980s, it was clear that more attention should be given to the accelerated publication of urgent, preliminary accounts of research work in progress. It seemed desirable also to accommodate brief final papers describing completed research projects of short duration. As a result, we have created two new features which appear for the first time in this issue of POLYMER. These are titled POLYMER COMMUNICATIONS and POLYMER REPORTS, respectively.

The selected format for contributions to POLYMER COMMUNICATIONS is similar to that of the old-style LETTERS section in POLYMER. Essential *experimental evidence* only is expected. Normally, a full paper will follow at a later date, but this rule is flexible. For example, circumstances will sometimes arise when it is desirable to adopt the communication format to publish brief, conceptually-important papers with the maximum speed.

The format adopted for contributions to POLYMER REPORTS is similar to that for a full-length paper. It is anticipated that there will be considerable interest in this feature. Continued economic constraints on both industrial and academic research programmes today result in frequent changes in research emphasis. There is evidence that much excellent work goes unpublished because it is insufficient in volume to justify a traditional, longer paper. POLYMER REPORTS will provide appropriate status for this work.

It is interesting to consider the broad subject areas covered in the first POLYMER COMMUNICATIONS feature contained in this issue. A significant number of papers are concerned with polymer synthesis and with chemical applications of speciality polymers. Assuming that POLYMER COMMUNICATIONS provides a balanced overview of research currently in progress in the field, this could indicate a resurgence of activity in the more traditional type of polymer chemistry. Whether or not this observation is significant will become clearer as subsequent issues of this feature are compiled.

Comments and views on the reorganization of POLYMER, and particularly on the two new features, are invited. The suggestions of authors and readers alike are invaluable in planning future developments.

Roger Epton