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THE LOS ANGELES MEETING OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

THE Southern California Section of the American Chemical Society were hosts for the seventieth meeting, held at Los Angeles from August 3 to 8, inclusive. More than two hundred made the journey from Chicago on a special train, following a delightful afternoon and evening as guests of the Chicago Chemists Club at the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston. The special train gave an opportunity for enjoying the attractions of Colorado Springs, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Albuquerque and Isleta, as well as the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

California chemists to the number of twenty-five met the train at Riverside, where after luncheon at the Mission Inn, the party proceeded by auto to the Southland ranch at Corona, where a complete demonstration of the methods used in fumigating citrus groves with liquid hydrocyanic acid gas was given. At the Lemonia grove the party was treated to all sorts of luscious fruits and heard something of the history of the citrus industry in California and something of the operation of the Exchange Lemon Products Company which operates two factories producing citric acid and other products from lemons.

The serious work of the meeting began with the council meeting on August 3. It was announced that the semicentennial meeting of the society would be held in Philadelphia the week beginning September 6, 1926, and that it is expected that the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry will meet the following week in Washington. The council unanimously passed the following resolution concerning chemical warfare.

WHEREAS, At a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, in May and June, 1925, called for an entirely different purpose, a protocol was drafted and signed purporting to outlaw the use of chemicals in war by agreement.

WHEREAS, The Geneva Conference was not only without technical advice on this vital national question of chemistry, but showed in their discussions a lamentable lack of understanding of chemical warfare and the dangers of hasty and ill-considered action, and

WHEREAS, The chemical and military experts in the Washington Conference of 1921 and 1922, after full discussion, recommended that it was against national safety to try to outlaw chemical warfare, which should be considered and controlled in war exactly as any other material or method of waging war; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the American Chemical Society meeting in convention in Los Angeles, California, goes strongly on

record against the ratification of the Geneva protocol on poisonous gases, as against both national safety and on the grounds of humanity.

The council also passed the following resolution offered by the Metric Committee:

WHEREAS, Those scientifically trained find the metric system of weights and measures more convenient to use than the English system; be it

Resolved, that the Council of the American Chemical Society request the manufacturers of photographic plates, films and chemicals to publish approved metric formulas in addition to the English formulas.

Special attention was called to the necessity of reaching an early decision regarding the publication of the second decennial Index to Chemical Abstracts, for which to date insufficient subscriptions have been received to warrant the directors in authorizing the very considerable work involved. Unless a sufficient sum is guaranteed by December 1, the advance subscriptions will be refunded and the project abandoned.

A new section of the society, to be known as the Northern Louisiana Section, with headquarters at Shreveport was authorized, and the name of the Southern Indiana Section changed to the St. Joseph Valley Section at its request.

A. M. Comey, of Cambridge, Mass., was reelected a member of the executive committee. J. F. Norris, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and now president of the society, and S. C. Lind, assistant director of the Fixed Nitrogen Research Laboratory, Washington, were elected to the board of the *Journal* of the American Chemical Society. Professor John Johnston, of Yale, F. W. Willard, of the Western Electric Company, and R. E. Wilson, of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana, were reelected to the editorial board of *Technologic Monographs.* Dr. Charles L. Parsons, of Washington, was reelected secretary for a term of three years.

The next meeting of the society will be held in the spring of 1926 at Tulsa, Okla., followed by the semicentennial meeting in September of that year at Philadelphia. The section at Richmond, Va., will entertain the society in the spring of 1927 with Detroit as the meeting place in the autumn of 1927.

At the general meeting open to the public, Alexander Findlay, of Glasgow, delivered an address on "The twilight zone of matter," and W. R. Whitney, of the General Electric Company, gave an unusual address on "Matter—is there anything in it?" profusely illustrated with special experiments arranged for the occasion and performed with apparatus taken to Los Angeles for the purpose.

Owing to the distance and the difficulty of arranging extended programs under the circumstances, several divisions and sections met jointly. The Divisions of Agricultural and Food Chemistry and of Biological Chemistry held a symposium on Chemistry and Plant Life, of which Charles D. Lipman, of the University of California, was chairman. The papers dealt principally with energy relations and physiological processes in plant metabolism and were followed by a group of papers dealing with the properties of starches, plant sterols, the activity of plant enzymes and the influence of certain chemicals upon plant growth and development. The general program of these divisions dealt with plant chemistry, human and animal nutrition, the chemistry of casein and the coagulation of milk.

The Insecticide and Fungicide Symposium was under the chairmanship of George B. Gray and considered petroleum insecticides, sulfur-oil combinations, the arsenates, the use of potassium xanthate as a soil insecticide, and the absorption of hydrocyanic acid for dried fruit products.

The Division of Sugar Chemistry joined the Divisions of Agricultural and Food and Biological Chemistry in a Pectin Symposium of which W. H. Dore was chairman. The need of uniform nomenclature on pectin was stressed and a committee appointed to study the situation and make recommendations. In the course of the symposium various phases from the composition of pectin to its manufacture and the requirements of pectin for the commercial jelly-maker were discussed.

The joint meeting of the Division of Chemical Education with the Section of the History of Chemistry attracted a large attendance, particular attention being given to a discussion of "What are our objectives in teaching chemistry?" This involved a discussion of the methods of presenting chemistry. One speaker stated the chief objective to be to teach the student how to get the facts rather than the facts themselves; another that the laboratory must be made a place for thinking instead of mechanical test-tubing, and that the scientific method must be closely followed in presenting the subject of chemistry. Another speaker insisted upon personal contact with the student as the prime essential, believing that most of the instruction should be given in the laboratory. In the discussion vigorous objection was made to the suggestion that it is at all possible to measure in percentages the gain or loss of intellectual processes. Both fact and ideas are necessary for the advancement of science, but to attain this it is doubtful if standard tests are advisable, since such tests are too apt to overshadow the real value of the subject.

The symposium was followed by a number of papers on various phases of the teaching and the history of chemistry.

The Divisions of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry and of Cellulose Chemistry held a joint meeting with the Section of Paint and Varnish Chemistry. The chemical industries of the West was the subject of a symposium with Charles A. Newhall as chairman. The progress of nitrogen fixation in the State of Washington was discussed, an interesting paper on the decomposition of liquid hydrocyanic acid presented, and a novel method for the manufacture of hydrochloric acid from chlorine given in some detail. Motor benzene and motor alcohol were the subject of two papers giving the status of this work in the West. Among the general papers was one by Professor Alexander Silverman, of the University of Pittsburgh, on the conservation of fuel and public health, in which statistics were presented showing losses due to the practice of allowing taxicab motors to idle, especially where the cabs are not provided with self-starters. There is not only an economic loss, but a considerable hazard to public health, due to the large quantities of carbon monoxide discharged.

The meetings of the Division of Organic Chemistry held jointly with the Division of Chemistry of Medicinal Products brought out seventeen papers, an unusually short program for these divisions. The principal discussions centered about the reactivity of alcohols and the toxicity of local anesthetics.

The Division of Petroleum Chemistry met with the Division of Gas and Fuel Chemistry in a successful meeting, the papers treating the various phases of the petroleum industry and gas and other fuels. An outstanding paper was that by R. E. Wilson on the prevention of evaporation losses from gasoline storage tanks, wherein breather bags are employed to permit the contraction and expansion of the air and vapor without loss.

A paper by Berry and Brown called attention to the effect of the fuel oil situation on gas company operations and the necessity, especially on the part of Pacific Coast gas companies, of research in the effort to develop other sources of raw material for gas production.

The Division of Physical and Inorganic Chemistry held a symposium on strong electrolytes with Professor Alexander Findlay presiding. This was followed by twenty-one papers on a great variety of topics which occupied three half-day sessions.

Before the Division of Sugar Chemistry ten papers of unusual quality were presented, the outstanding one being that by J. H. Bon and A. A. Blowski on decolorizing carbons. Two papers on the preparation of levulose from artichokes brought out the fact that this year for the first time dahlias have been successfully started from seed, thereby removing the greatest objection to the dahlia as a raw material for the manufacture of levulose.

The meeting was characterized by a particularly enjoyable program of entertainment in addition to the interest shown in the scientific part of the program. Besides visiting the oil fields, several industrial plants in the vicinity, and Hollywood, those attending the meeting were entertained at an avocado luncheon, enjoyed dinner and dancing at the Miromar at Santa Monica, took part in a frolic at the hotel, and enjoyed a banquet at which President J. F. Norris gave his address. The meeting concluded with an afternoon and night on Mount Wilson, followed by an inspection of the laboratories in Pasadena and the demonstration of some of the equipment in the million volt laboratory of the California Institute of Technology. After a concluding luncheon, the party took up the post-convention program. This included a visit to the plant of the Trona Corporation at Searles Lake, an informal meeting at San Francisco where industrial plants and the great educational institutions were visited, and sightseeing about California and in the northwest, particularly at Portland and Mount Rainier.

The attendance at the meeting gave a total of 878, three being from Canada, one from India, one from the Philippine Islands, and two from Scotland.

H. E. HOWE

SERVICE OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY TO THE NATION[1]

THE happy idea of the local committee of having the president give his address at the close of the banquet has resulted in a lack of formality very agreeable to the speaker. I have been tempted to talk informally in an after-dinner style, but tradition demands the serious consideration of a subject of vital importance. In his admirable address last year, Dr. Baekeland stated that he had read the addresses of all the past presidents of the society. I had not the courage to follow his excellent example. I was afraid that I should find that all the words of wisdom had been spoken; that all the valuable ideas had been expressed. I did not want to be hampered by the thought that I was but repeating what had been better said by others. So the problem of this talk was approached in a way not in accord with the scientific method. Ignorant of the literature of presidential addresses some thoughts were written down boldly with confidence in the good luck that mysteriously looks after the cheerful in spirit.

[1] Given at a banquet in connection with the seventieth meeting of the society, Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California, on August 6, 1925.