

Division of Professional Relations
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Washington, DC 20036

DENNIS CHAMOT, *Editor*



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FROM THE EDITOR . . .

Report from San Francisco

I had not been to San Francisco for several years, but my memories of earlier visits filled me with pleasant anticipation as the ACS national meeting approached. I must report, however, that the continuing economic decline of American cities has also affected this one. Most of the meetings were at downtown hotels, and walking from one to another, one could not help but notice the large number of street people, the closed and empty stores (including a large Woolworth's going out of business), and the presence just off Union Square of stores that would not look out of place on 42nd Street in my native New York. It's certainly time for a change.

The ACS meeting itself, though, offered the usual mix of activities, and sessions appeared to be very well attended. The biggest battle was over a "governance restructuring" petition. This one would have eliminated the Council Committee on Professional Relations, the Joint Board-Council Committee on Economic Status, the Board Committee on Professional and Member Relations, and a coordinating committee, PROPPACC, and replaced them all with a 15-member Society committee. All four of the affected committees voted to oppose the restructuring petition, and there was much discussion at Councilor caucuses. Proponents argued that this was a move toward greater efficiency, but the Budget and Finance Committee had determined that there would be only a minor effect on Society finances (positive *or* negative!). Opponents argued that opportunities for Councilors to serve as committee members would be reduced; that Council influence would be reduced (because the new committee would have up to two Board members on it, and several members, as with other Society committees, would not have to be either Councilors or Board Members); that the present system works well (although PROPPACC could be eliminated). In the end, the petition did not get the required two-thirds vote and failed.

After such lively debate, it was interesting that dues were not debated at all. The escalator would have permitted a four dollar increase for next year, but because of some unexpected revenues last year, and in recognition of the effects of the recession on our membership, Budget and Finance recommended a raise of only two dollars, which was approved.

For me, personally, one of the most interesting activities were the meetings of the Committee on Project SEED. As you know, Project SEED is the Society's premiere social action program, providing a summer educational experience for economically disadvantaged high school kids. I had been appointed chairman of the committee this year, and it is most gratifying to be a part of such a valuable program. In fact, the program was begun by a vote of the Council in San Francisco 24 years ago, and this year for the first time (as a direct result of the generosity of the Bader Family), there will be a second summer program available for some of the students. Project SEED is a very worthwhile activity of the ACS, one of which all of us can be quite proud, and I urge all of you to consider contributing.

Election Results

For the record, the following were chosen in the last DPR election, and currently serve on the Executive Committee:

Raquel Diaz-Sprague, *Chairman-elect*
Ann Nalley, *Secretary*
Bela Buslig, *Councilor*
Margil Wadley, *Alternate Councilor*
Grace Borowitz, *Member-at-large*
Seymour Patinkin, *Member-at-large*
Atilla Pavlath, *Member-at-large*

-- Dennis Chamot

The following talk was presented at the DPR symposium, "Professional Development of Foreign-Born Chemical Scientists" (Co-sponsored by the Chinese-American Chemical Society), held in San Francisco, April 7, 1992. It is a bit of a change of pace from our usual articles. Dr. Eliel offers some interesting observations, and I hope you enjoy the piece -- Ed.

A WESTERN EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE FROM YEARS PAST

**Ernest L. Eliel, President
American Chemical Society**

When Tom Kucera organized this symposium, he evidently noted the fact that the president of the Society was himself an immigrant and so he asked me to be one of the speakers. My first thought was to give a purely anecdotal talk and to start by saying, "This country is obviously still a land of unlimited opportunities where an immigrant can even become president of the largest scientific society". This statement, while true, is clearly not sufficient for the purpose of this symposium.

I have another problem. My talk is, for two reasons, barely relevant. The first reason is that while since the beginning of this country, and certainly since the turn of the century and until after World War II, most immigrants came from Europe, including Western Europe, the situation has changed drastically in the last two decades. Most immigrants now come from Asia and (especially if illegal immigration is factored in) from Central and South America. This situation may change again in the present decade, of course -- since travel restrictions in Eastern Europe have now been lifted with the demise of communism, we may expect substantial immigration from that part of the world.

A related problem for me is that I left Germany 54 years ago and arrived here 46 years ago. You might wonder why it took me eight years to make it to the United States from Germany. The dislocations of World War II certainly had much to do with that -- I spent two of the intervening years in Scotland, one as an internee in Canada and five as a student in Havana, Cuba.

But there was another reason, painfully evident from the immigration statistics. The 1940s -- a time when many refugees wanted to flee that part of Europe which was under Hitler's dictatorship -- saw the lowest number of immigrants to the United States ever. Quota restrictions trapped many of these potential refugees in Europe where they were eventually cruelly murdered. Fortunately I escaped that fate, but it is true that the quota number for which I registered at the U.S. Consulate in Germany in 1937 was not called up for processing until 1940, nearly three years later.

Let me get back to the question of relevance. I believe there was much more difference between Western Europe and the United States 50 years ago than there is now. Where it now takes seven hours to fly to Europe, then it took seven days to go by boat. A phone call cost ten times as much as it does now in actual dollars, and probably more than 50 times as much in inflation-adjusted dollars. The steady traffic of European students to the United States was then still a small trickle, although -- and this is something I find very disconcerting -- the number of students going to Europe has probably not increased greatly in these 50 years. Probably the major vehicle of cultural exchange in pre-World War II days were the movies, and Hollywood often provided a distorted picture; there was no television, of course, and no satellites, and short-wave radio did not adequately span the Atlantic.

Well, what then were my impressions when I came to the USA in 1946 and what did I have to do to adjust? The first thing that struck me was the enormous friendliness and helpfulness of almost everyone I met. In 1946 there was a flood of returning veterans who were set to go to college with the help of the GI Bill, which paid for their tuition and living expenses. Thus Champaign-Urbana, where I was going to graduate school at the University of Illinois, was greatly overcrowded. The only way to find a room was to knock on doors and ask. This idea terrified me at first -- in Europe this would have been considered an invasion of privacy. But in Illinois, everyone I talked to was kind and supportive and very soon I had found a room.

The second observation, for one who had already lived in an English-speaking country and managed the language quite well, was that the obvious similarity between the U.S. and Western Europe can be deceptive. There are in fact some important differences which it is well to keep in mind.

The two slogans we had learned about the United States were, "Time is money," and, "Keep smiling." The importance of the first one became obvious only with time, but that of the second was immediate. Smiles are more important in the U.S. than they are in Western Europe;

being perceived as a "sourpuss" here is one strike (or maybe two strikes) against one.

Which reminds me that sports in America, as in Europe, are very important, but the terminology is different since it derives from baseball and football (and nowadays also from basketball) and not from soccer or field hockey (or if you come from the United Kingdom, as I did, cricket or rugby).

Americans (with the possible exception of New Yorkers) are less overtly critical than Europeans often are. One does not complain about trivia here; it is best not to speak up unless a situation is really bad. And, of course, the language itself is different from what it is in the U.K.: the bonnet of a car is called the hood and the boot is called the trunk; a lift is an elevator, etc. On the other hand, unlike Europeans, Americans like foreign accents in their language unless they are so strong as to become unintelligible. So if you come from foreign lands, don't spend too much time emulating the exact pronunciation of your hosts, especially since that varies quite a bit in different parts of the country.

When I came to this country in 1946, one of the striking features related to the honesty of the people. We used not to lock our cars or even our homes. Business was often done with a handshake rather than with a contract. I fear this may no longer be the case, but the level of trust in this country is probably still higher than in most other parts of the world.

Americans are less formal than Western Europeans and one should be careful not to overdress in this country, especially when the occasion is social and informal. Americans are also less likely than Europeans to take themselves very seriously (perhaps I should say they are less likely to be pompous?) and more prone to laugh at themselves. However, our humor tends to be uncomplicated. The wittiness of the English and the sarcasm of the Germans and French do not go over well in this country.

Most Americans are generous with time and money, but it is well not to take this for granted. There is lots of voluntary giving to charitable causes here, much

more so than in Europe, and while one's giving must be governed by one's means and one's interest in the cause at hand, it is not good form always to refuse to give; being considered stingy and picayune is probably even worse in this country than it is elsewhere. It is also amazing to the immigrant how much time Americans spend on volunteer activities on behalf of a variety of causes ranging from charitable to political. Participation in such causes is not mandatory, but it is well regarded, especially in smaller communities, and it is a way to make friends. By the same token, unless you are a determined agnostic, you may wish to affiliate with a church or synagogue of your choosing; friendships and useful contacts may result.

Which reminds me that the word "friend" has a different meaning here from what it has in Western Europe. It is more like what we would have called in the old country a "close acquaintance". It is customary to call each other by first name here after having seen each other only once or twice; some people even start first naming from the moment of introduction. By the same token, once you have exchanged two letters with the same correspondent, you sign it with your first name and you will then be addressed with your first name in the next exchange. I could go on, but this is not supposed to be a primer on American etiquette.

You have probably heard enough about jobs and education in the course of this symposium. But let me emphasize again the recipe to get ahead is to work hard, to be flexible and enterprising, to be inventive, and, above all, to get along. "Team play", as it is called, is very important in the United States. If you are looking for a job, and if you are a member of the ACS, there are various forms of help that ACS can give you -- ranging from job-wanted-ads in **C&E News** (which are free if you are unemployed) to the Employment Clearinghouses at national and regional meetings. I hope we shall be able to help you; I realize that a foreign professional is at somewhat of a disadvantage in the labor market for having had experience in another country which most potential employers here cannot easily judge.

I have lived in this country since 1946; it has provided great opportunities for me. I love it deeply. I hope those of you who have come to our shores recently will have the same good experience.

DPR Membership Application

I am a member of the American Chemical Society.
Enclosed is \$4 to cover dues through December 31, 1992.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

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BOOK REVIEW

"From Caveman to Chemist," by Hugh W. Salzberg. 269 pages plus extensive index. Published by the American Chemical Society, 1991. Paperback, \$14.95; hardback \$24.95.

Let me not beat around the bush. This is a fascinating, well written, enjoyable book. Ambitious, too. To quote the blurb, "Salzberg examines the cultural and political influences on the ideas of chemists. He follows the evolution of chemistry from the *Stone Age beginnings* of ceramics and metallurgy through the rise and decline of alchemy, to the culmination of classical chemistry in the late 19th century (emphasis added)."

The first 150 pages brings us only to the year 1500, and those chapters are filled with interesting discussion and fascinating tidbits (did you know, for example, that the modern Chinese euphemism for suicide is to "drink gold"? Chinese alchemists spent centuries looking for the elixir of life, believing it to be a solution of gold. Uncounted people died after drinking a variety of gold colored-liquids).

The remainder of the book takes the reader through a necessarily brief, but highly lucid account of the beginnings of modern chemistry, ending around 1900. The modern science is firmly established, much has been accomplished, and the quantum revolution is just around the corner. One finishes the book hoping that Salzberg is working on a sequel.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone looking for a readable survey of the history of our profession. It would also make a great gift for anyone interested in the history of science.

HENRY HILL AWARD



This year's Henry Hill Award was presented at the San Francisco meeting to **Thomas Fitzsimmons**. Tom, currently a System Chemist with Basin Electric Power Cooperative in Bismarck, North Dakota, was the prime mover in the effort to establish the Division of Professional Relations. After the Division was approved at the April, 1972, Council meeting, Tom served as first chairman, and presided over the first DPR symposium, presented in New York in the fall of 1972.

Tom noted that the idea for a division of professional relations came from his experiences in observing a mass layoff of chemists first hand. "I won't go into all the efforts to get DPR underway, but it was a lot of effort, and sometimes it seems like all I did was talk on the telephone with Norm Pinkowski, Mike Linfield and Dennis Chamot."

As Tom wrote in the first issue of the **PR Bulletin**, "The Division is in existence to forcefully and clearly bring member concerns on professional relations matters to the attention of ACS officers, Councilors and staff." That is just as true on the twentieth anniversary of Tom's achievement.