

**Division of Professional Relations
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FROM THE EDITOR ...

Report from Denver

Probably the most important event at the recent national meeting in Denver, at least from the standpoint of the members of DPR, was the vote of the Council to eliminate several committees and substitute one new one. Those eliminated (as of the end of this year) are the Committee on Professional Relations (CPR), the Committee on Economic Status (CES), and a co-ordinating committee, PROPPACC. Created is a new Council Standing Committee on Economic and Professional Affairs (CEPA).

The vote was extremely close -- 234 in favor, 115 against -- just barely getting the two-thirds needed to pass a bylaw amendment. [Of course, as some would point out, another way to look at it is that the measure got overwhelming support, with two-thirds voting for it]. At this point, the deed is done, and we need to move forward to make the best of the new situation.

Let me review a little history. The original proposal was to eliminate all the committees mentioned above

(CPR, CES, PROPPACC), as well as the Board Committee on Professional and Member Relations. The new committee to replace all of this would be a Society Committee. This proposal nearly passed when it was presented to the Council a year ago, falling only two votes short of two-thirds, if I remember correctly. As the vote was so close, the supporters of the petition reintroduced it, and there was a very good chance that this proposal would pass the next time around.

Several of us thought this would be a bad move, a step backwards. While an argument could be made that a Society Committee (SC) would have more prestige than a Council Committee (CC), there were several arguments against. First, the membership of a SC includes both councilors and board members; strict accountability to, and control by, the Council is reduced. Second, SCs can have several members who are neither Board members nor Council members, so that the top policy making committee in the areas of professional relations and economic status would have members who were not elected

representatives of the membership. And third, the number of people on the committee, those who would have the power to make the ultimate decisions in these areas, would be far fewer than are currently active on CPR and CES. [Some argue that there would be plenty of opportunity to serve on subcommittees, but decisions are made by committees, not subcommittees].

Faced with the prospect of the creation of a highly undesirable new body, several people tried to work on a compromise that would eliminate the major objections, even though it would not preserve the status quo. The membership of CPR took the lead, and ultimately the compromise was passed. The new committee remains entirely in the Council; it is a standing committee; and the membership is enlarged from 15 to 24 members.

Clearly, many of us would have been much happier to keep CPR and CES. Now we need to move ahead and make sure that all of the major programs currently carried out by the committees that are

eliminated will continue under the new one.

Election results

For the record, here are the official results of the last DPR election:

Chair-elect: Michael Brownfield
Treasurer: Stephen Quigley
Members-at Large of the Executive Committee:

John Borchardt
Tom Kucera
Robert Neuman

You may recall that there were some major delays in conducting this election. The group of dedicated DPR members who jumped into a difficult situation and finally carried this through to completion deserve our thanks and gratitude.

Immigrant Scientists

Did you know that chemistry and chemical engineering are fields experiencing such severe shortages of personnel that the Department of Labor (DoL) is suggesting that the immigration process be simplified to permit more foreign scientists to come here to work? In fact, that kind of thinking has stirred up a storm of protest.

In case you haven't been following this closely, it all stems from the 1990 revision of the nation's immigration laws. One of the functions of these laws is to protect the interests of people in this country, to prevent the misuse and abuse of foreigners who would work at much less

than prevailing salaries just to be able to come to the United States. This was done in part by requiring that employers search for qualified Americans before seeking entry of a foreign worker. Employers had complained that the process requiring certification of a need for a foreign worker based on a shortage of Americans with requisite skills (as evidenced by an inability to hire an American) was burdensome and time consuming. They wanted a faster process. (Some of us with a more cynical view, and with a knowledge of almost fraudulent help wanted ads that run from time to time in C&EN, Science, and other places, believe the motive may be different -- a desire to pay lower salaries). The 1990 legislation required the DoL to come up with a new system.

DoL proposed a pilot program through which areas of shortage would be identified. Then the employer would only have to certify that the proposed immigrants have the right skills. Sounds fine on paper. Unfortunately, the methodology used by the DoL gave ludicrous results.

Of the ten fields listed as in shortage, six were in science and engineering. The reality, of course, is quite different. ACS sent in an official comment, noting that in several states, unemployment among chemists doubled or tripled since 1990. Several other technical societies sent in comments, including IEEE, AIChE, ASME, and others. Strongly negative comments were also submitted by the AFL-CIO and its Department for Professional Employees.

It's too early to tell what will happen. There's a new administration, but there is still the old legislative mandate. You might want to contact your Congressman and let him or her know what you think about chemist shortages. For more background, see my article in CHEMTECH (November 1991, p. 651), C&EN (April 26, 1993, P. 6), and The Washington Post, May 7, 1993, p. A21.

Commercial

The fight over ACS governance restructuring (see above) illustrates once again the value of an active DPR. Your two divisional Councilors (Dennis Chamot and Bela Buslig), and other Executive Committee members who are Councilors or Board members (including Secretary Ann Nalley, Treasurer Steve Quigley, past chair John Ruth, and at-large member Attila Pavlath) were at the heart of the battle. Were it not for their efforts, and those of other DPR members, we would have undoubtedly lost the initial vote and been saddled with a Society Committee and little influence. The final result is not everyone's choice, but better three-fourths of a loaf than none at all. DPR made a difference.

We must grow. Go out and sign up some friends.

-- Dennis Chamot

BOOK REVIEW

"Steroids Made It Possible," by Carl Djerassi; "Following the Trail of Light," by Melvin Calvin; "From Cologne to Chapel Hill", by Ernest L. Eliel. *Profiles, Pathways and Dreams* series, published by the American Chemical Society. Hardback, \$24.95 each.

These are three books in a continuing series of autobiographies of major figures in modern chemistry.

There are, of course, similarities between the books. Each gives some biographical details of the author. The bulk of the each volume is devoted to summarizing a long and productive chemical career, with an extensive list of references for anyone who wishes to read the details of particular research studies that can only be given in very sketchy form here. And based on this sample (N=3), they are reasonably to extremely well written, and interesting to read.

If my own experience is any guide, you would probably most enjoy books by chemists whose fields are reasonably familiar to you, for two very different reasons. First, the emphasis is on the *chemical* career; there's not enough purely personal biography -- including gossip about colleagues -- to sustain interest on that basis alone. Second, there is so much chemical detail that the reading might be slow going in areas that are reasonably far removed from your specialty.

Personally, I enjoyed Eliel's book the most. Overall, this is a fascinating series, and I would recommend that you get the full list of available biographies from the ACS publications office. As of this writing, the books by the following chemists were available:

Derek H. R. Barton
Arthur J. Birch
Melvin Calvin
Donald J. Cram
Michael J. S. Dewar
Carl Djerassi
Ernest L. Eliel

Egbert Havinga
Rolf Huisgen
William S. Johnson
Raymond U. Lemieux
Herman Mark
Bruce Merrifield
Teruaki Mukaiyama
Koji Nakanishi

Tetsuo Nozoe
Vladimir Prelog
John Roberts
Paul von Rague Schleyer
F. G. A. Stone
Andrew Streitwieser, Jr.
Cheves Walling

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