

## MCA mulls chemical industry's bad image

"We've never had it so good and so bad all at the same time." This remark just about summed up the feelings of the host of chemical industry executives who gathered in New York City last week for the 23rd semiannual meeting of the Manufacturing Chemists Association.

The combination of record chemical sales, earnings, and production coupled with the uncertainties brought on by the energy crisis gave the industry top brass plenty to talk about as they assembled for what turned out to be one of the largest ever fall MCA meetings.

But one of the major topics on the formal program at the meeting—the industry's image in the eyes of the public—gave them something more to ponder as they left. The industry's image is bad, it's not really getting any better. And, what's more, its image deserves to be bad.

And this criticism did not come from environmentalists. Some of it came from William P. Hobby, Jr., who is lieutenant governor of Texas, a state well known for its generally friendly attitude toward the chemical industry. Lt. Gov. Hobby said rather bluntly that the industry should stop wasting time and effort on trying to "justify the unjustifiable"—particularly in trying to keep products of doubtful safety on the market.

Dr. Ross E. McKinney, professor of civil engineering at the University of Kansas, stressed that it is easy to blame the poor reaction to the chemical industry on liberal college professors, fuzzy-headed writers, and other factors. But such rationalization cannot solve the basic image problem of the chemical industry. The negative image of the industry has a basis of fact, he points out.

Betty Furness, commissioner of New York City's Department of Consumer Affairs and a luncheon speaker at the meeting, zeroed in on the key to industry's image problem—credibility. "The consumer's trust in industry has been shaken," she insists.

What to do about it? Be honest with the public, take full responsibility for the safety of products, and don't waste money on image advertising (nobody believes it).

## In Brief:

**Plastics fabricators are asking price control relief** for resin suppliers, as higher prices are driving resin into overseas markets. (Facing page)

**Stabilizing world population at 7 billion** should be the goal of the U.S. (Facing page)

**Another big step toward expansion of U.S.-China trade** has been taken. (Facing page)

**The chemical industry has a bad image** and had best take steps to correct it, speakers tell MCA. (This page)

**Reducing lead time for nuclear power plants is necessary** if the energy gap is to be closed. Several approaches are being considered. (Page 7)

**Is the petrochemical industry of little social value, a hazard to the environment, a gluttonous consumer of scarce fuels?** Dr. Barry Commoner thinks so. (Page 9)

**Effects of the Arab oil embargo may be bleak—a 3.6% dent in GNP, rising unemployment—unless action is taken now,** says the National Petroleum Council. (Page 10)

**Chemical company stocks are taking a beating on Wall Street, where they are declining even faster than the Dow-Jones Industrial Index.** (Page 10)

**Acute chemical shortages seem inevitable in the U.K.** Chemical firms there probably will not invest enough money to keep output in pace with demand. (Page 11)

**Japan is taking steps to deal with the Arab oil cutback.** Prime target is industry, which must cut consumption by 10% through year's end. (Page 12)

**Federal employment picture for scientists varies considerably,** according to an NSF study. The report covers job growth rate, salaries, and position of minorities. (Page 17)

**Eliminating graft from engineering contract awards** is the aim of proposals from the National Society of Professional Engineers. (Page 18)

**Discovery of three new "memory" brain peptides** is further evidence for the chemical nature of long-term memory. (Page 20)

**Most of NASA's lunar receiving lab has gone to AEC** at its Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. (Page 21)

**A Soviet scientist who emigrated speaks of the difficulties** involved and present conditions in the U.S.S.R. (Page 21)

**Backgrounds and accomplishments of the 1974 recipients of awards** administered by ACS are detailed. (Page 23)

**Petition to amend the way ACS elects directors and councilors** has been proposed. (Page 35)

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