

KURUP P K, OIL TECHNOLOGIST,
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INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS on OILSEEDS AND OILS.

Never before, perhaps, I am afraid, was such a momentous get-together organised in India, that is Bharat, under the auspices of the O T A I (Oil Technologists' Association, India) thanks to the D C M Chemical Works and the very able Convener Mr. Shingal. Surely, it must have been planned about two years ago taking into account the large number of active delegates from Europe, the U S A, Canada, the far east Philippines, Australia, and land of the Rising Sun. The assembled aggregated over five hundred. The sessions lasted for five days with an extra day for Excursions to nearby laboratories, factories and farms in batches. The Eves were three or four. In the nature of it, to Delegates from India, the cost must have been about Rs 4000/ each while to those eager participants from far off, it must have been very high indeed.

Taking the non-hours into consideration, for this social event, more a TAMASHA than practical usefulness, in the nature of it, the total expenditure may be of the order of near Rupees fifty lakhs. Was it worth while is a moot point. Many Industrial houses or Individuals "hosted" tea, lunch, etc; but the final banquet was paid for, Rupees fifty, registration fee a century.

If the D C M Staff were the active volunteers, Convener Mr. Shingal and Prof. M M Chakraborty, Calcutta, a past President of the O T A I were the principal announcers and very able too.

After the ritual "invoking" by some young ladies, and hana hana stuff, the gracious Prime Minister of India, sparsely attired began his inopportune Inaugural speech. His approach was Gandhian. He cautioned the assembled Technicians about refining edible oils and likely loss of yet to be detected trace-constituents pardon me, as in URINE - Therapy in which Japan is keenly as in everything they attempt, interested in, the USA not lagging behind. There was no customary bouquet-presentation, nor garlanding, either.

At the conclusion of speech by the Prime Minister, from the front bench stood up a white-haired, the oldest Oil Technologist aged 88, Mr Kurup P K of Bombay #77/7/44/ like a Jehovah from the Old Testament and requested the Hon'ble P M, democratically to mix with the crowd that they may have a snap of him as a souvenir or a heir-loom for their successors. Many were aghast at this effrontery as it were. But, the Prime Minister graciously came down from the dais and snaps were taken and on shaking hands Mr Kurup told him he was from Bombay, aged about 88 and a Janatite. The P M replied him that he should like to talk him sometime

Tea or Coffee-break take up much time, which is when social intercourse can take place and pleasantries exchanged.

The papers to be read were many. In spite of the like many were inaudible or ineffectively read. Some were taken as read. The most memorable speech was the DCM Ramaswamy Lecture by Dr. T Swaminathan head of the I C A R. In his practised impromptu unassuming style, he orated without any gestures, standing erect, reminiscent of a great Indian Scientist, Sir C V Raman of Madras whose academic research has great industrial application in penetrating molecules. Sir C V R was a blunt, perhaps cynical talker, as he was reported to have said that what was needed in India was white cap on head and nothing below. Also that what most Indian scientists did was to copy in which they were adept, but not when a repair was to be done to many a sophisticated Pandora's box imported from the west at tremendous cost, he as many knew a great improviser of simple gadgets, with simple indigenous availability. Swaminathan spoke non-stop and most effectively and listened to in pin-drop-silence & cheered.

The well-merited Honorary was handed over to Dr Swaminathan.

Regular sessions commenced, announced either by Mr Singhal or by Prof Chakraborty, tall spruce and very distinct in delivery.

Among the foreign delegates, the speech by a Greek was in fluent English, while, amusingly, some English speakers did their part more in what the Englishman says as the tongue of the wise Socrates. Many papers were of questionable utility.

Mr THOMAS Thomas, Head of the Hindustan Lever, who by my merit rose to the present exalted position from humble beginnings, had a lengthy, data-full paper and one can have no doubt that on perusing leisurely, it will be found to be of immense thought-provoking nature. Being a very busy man Mr Thomas did not stay longer than he could, but was a lesson in emulation.

If the questions at the end of each paper were many, the answers were either unsatisfactory or evasive, as the participants were nor perhaps unprepared for such bombardment.

In the evenings, there was some "cultural programme", folk dance, by girls and young men, a necessary diversion.

There was the annual report reading in the evening, the election of Office bearers for the ensuing year, a regular Caucus and everything passed nem-con. The meek Dr SHUKLA of the Harcourt Butler retired and Dr Siddu of RRI Hyderabad was elected as the President for the following term.

Some prizes were awarded to RRI Lakshminarayan and others, gold medal or cash for "original work".

The originality of many papers from R R L Hyderabad or sister Institutes at Anantapur of C F T R Mysore is sort of disputable foundation. You give raw material, to Mysore and you can get "cooked results," pardon me.

10 or 20 Kg lots were experimented on at the R R L Hyderabad but, the old Jehovah rose to point out that for over ten years in Bombay Oil factory and at Jayant Oils, Bhandup 10 ton lots were hydrogenated day after day and where was the adumbrated "originality". For that matter, he said that if one had cared to ascertain from the archives of the Government Kerala soap Institute, Calicut, one could have found that most of the so-called minor seeds were worked on there in 1920s when he was the Asst Superintendent. Every available oil from *Abrus precatorius*, *Adonantha favonina*, *Belottis Philipensis*, to *Sterculia foetida* and *Xylia xylicarpum* were collected and used in soap making, not to omit the rank smelling *Clupea sardinus* Malabar sardine oil, the latter being made into odorless Kasturi by Mr S Kini at Mangalore daily to the tune of about 5 tons. And yet one hears year after year at seminars the hackneyed minor seed oils discovered by some who are no more now. It is fine this myth is laid to rest. Economic collection of lipids or for that matter, any article depends on exigencies and availability. Mr Kurup drew the attention of Dr Siddu that hereafter if any re-search is attempted under him, he had better ask his assistants to ascertain if the work has been done on the proposed subject elsewhere already, lest the papers go under the category of "Plagiarism". He also told Mr Bernadini of Italy the same when a paper on a new solvent extraction technique was publicised; It was just De smet system modified and perhaps without acknowledging.

Dr K T Achaiyya in his characteristic manner effectively spoke about invisible fat assimilation, or proteins, reminding one of Phlogiston in the days of Robert Boyle, great scientists of those early days. It is curiuser as Alice said in the wonder land when Mr Kurup declared truthfully that since about two years his daily caloric intake was less than 200 Kg against the international 3000/ - myth, but relevant to Norwegians et al.

The most impressive reading was by Director G K Menon head of the Hindusthan Lever Research centre, Andheri and those who were not drowsy after a heavy lunch must have listened to it with rapt attention.

Another lengthy paper was about use of copper in plants. It is most controversial. A village wench will not cook in a pot of copper, even if she can afford it, unless tinned. But, the

In the words of a previous Prime Minister, even if it was fantastic absurdity, to rise and criticise every paper would be if not discourteous to the foreign delegate, irritable to the toler and crowd on this side of the dais and so Dr K refrained.

And now the finale. Dr Jagjivan Ram, Deputy Prime Minister of the second order, Choudary Charan Singh being of the first order, pardon me, read out his valedictory speech.

Dr Kurup stood up and requested him also to mix with the delegates in a democratic way, but, the conveners tried to lead him away not before his imprimatur was got on a telegram just received announcing the 88th birthday of the old man.

The summing up was done by Dr Acharya, a past master in this art, in his modulated diction, followed by Prof Chakraborty. Both failed to make mention of the inauguration by the ever busy Prime Minister and when Dr Kurup drew attention to this defect, he made himself persona non grata to the establishment or caucus.

Like one used to hear about the battle of Blenheim, it was a great victory, a most memorable event in the life of UTAJ.

The next day was for excursions when at the National Nuclear Research Labs, one was able to see how with a single seed and in a few seconds the oil content could be ascertained by NIR technique and the instrument costing he dly ₹ 10000/.

Dr Singhal and the ICM Chemical works deserve our thanks.

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