

Continued from page 34

which would require maintenance of multiple public facilities by the patent office, seems of doubtful value in view of existing service. Public service, even on prepaid requests for patent copies and/or information, is slow or impossible with the existing organization in Washington. It would seem that currently available service ought to be improved before it is diffused, since multiple centers would probably be even less accessible for general public service and would serve mainly as an arm of large, specialized business enterprise. For one thing, patents are already too numerous to search based on the products they support or on the manufacturer of given products. It is necessary to know the specific inventor (usually the assignor) and probably the issue date or patent number as well. Subject matter, as from product information, is not sufficient. Hence the service aspect does not really include facilities for full public disclosure as an agreed commitment in return for protection of a right to exclusive practice of the subject matter of a patent. Practically, this means that disclosure is achieved only within a specialized industrial community, not for the general consumer, and not for groups that may envision other means to desired ends or uses other than those claimed by inventors and their assignees. If additional facilities are established, I would hope they would provide patent searches from subject matter or product information alone for interested consumers and for public interest groups.

Arthur H. Goldkamp

Bellevue, Wash.

Diocetylphthalate

SIRS: The identification by Dr. D. J. Nazir and coworkers of diocetylphthalate in the hearts of cows, dogs, rabbits, and rats (C&EN, Nov. 8, 1971, page 7) leads me to call attention to our own experiences with this compound. In particular we are concerned lest there be a predisposition to overidentify this material as a pollutant, in view of its industrial use as a plasticizer and to ignore its possible geochemical significance.

In 1958, H. F. Phillips and I published the results of studies in which we identified a diocetylphthalate in a crude oil from Duchesne County, Utah (*Geochim. et Cosmochim. Acta*, 15, 51). Shortly after the paper appeared, we were confronted by skeptics who felt that we had laboriously isolated a contaminant, namely a plasticizer. We could only reply by pointing out that we never use plastic of any kind in our work and, moreover, that it would be most difficult to attribute 0.15% of a crude oil to contamination from a plastic (which was never used, anyhow!). The ester we had isolated, we feel now as we did then, was indigenous to the oil.

At a somewhat later date, a colleague studying an Italian oil identified the same ester. To satisfy his skeptics, he repeated the entire collection of the oil and its analysis taking every possible precaution to avoid contamination of any sort. Again he isolated the diocetylphthalate. Still a third colleague, this time French, was able to detect phthalic anhydride routinely in crude oils from North Africa.

It is quite obvious from our experiences that diocetylphthalate occurs at least in certain crude oils. As we noted in our paper, however, the origin of the ester is

unknown, and the compound could be either a preserved metabolic product or might have been formed during formation of the oil. If Dr. Nazir and coworkers are able to elucidate the origin of this and related esters, they may indirectly be making a major contribution to our knowledge regarding the origin of petroleum.

Irving A. Breger

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Geneva Protocol

SIRS: A draft convention for the prohibition of biological warfare was submitted to the UN General Assembly on Sept. 30, 1971. Although the framers of the draft convention, the United States foremost among them, reaffirm their "adherence to the principles and objectives" of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and call upon all states to comply strictly with them, the effect of the draft convention is to undermine the clear prohibition of the Geneva Protocol, which bans the first use in war of "asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices . . . and of bacterial methods of warfare."

The proposed convention will handicap rather than strengthen efforts to achieve an effective ban on CB weapons. The simple wording of the Geneva Protocol was effective until undermined by the United States' employment in Vietnam of tear gases, harassing agents, herbicides, defoliants, etc. It thus ill behooves our Government to proclaim "adherence" to its "principles and objectives"! The destruction of bacteriological weapons and a renunciation of their further development and production is to be welcomed, but it is of little use if a ban on chemical weapons, including harassing agents, herbicides, and defoliants is not also agreed upon. The renunciation of biological weapons alone is an attempt to provide a smokescreen for continued use of chemical weaponry in flagrant violation of the Geneva Protocol and in disregard of world public opinion (viz. the UN resolution of December 1969).

Our Government should ratify the 1925 Geneva Protocol without any qualifying reservations, and should renounce the development, stockpiling, and use of chemical as well as of biological weapons.

J. S. Bellin

Associate Professor of Chemistry, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Straits of retired persons

SIRS: Although the Society has taken some steps to enhance the employment opportunities of its retired members, and although ACS also has taken the lead in developing a new pension system with emphasis on portability of benefits using a variable annuity approach, I feel it important that the Society ponder what it can do to remedy the massive impact of inflation on the large body of currently retired members.

In many instances, their woefully small pensions have reduced their income to the poverty level, even though their pensions earlier were calculated in good faith from employer and employee contributions based on insurance mathematics and related equity. The present pitiful value of such pensions is entirely due to inflation, for which the individual employer and employee are not directly accountable.

Nevertheless, nothing short

evaluation through the insurance companies financed from new employer contributions affecting cost plus federal contributions can bring any tangible alleviation. This is clearly a political issue.

It can be seriously questioned as to whether a huge deserving and politically as well as biologically active segment of the population can be omitted from cost of living adjustments which are experienced by other occupational groups where lobbying pressure is strong enough to rock the ship.

If the Society, as I foresee, plans to rechart its course in the direction of being more responsive to members' professional interests, then I suggest that it should take a strong and lively interest in applying equal pressure to improve the economic status of retired chemists and chemical engineers in a similar vein.

Norbert J. Kreidl

Rolla, Mo.

Environmental studies

SIRS: In your Science/Education Concentrates (C&EN, Nov. 1, 1971, page 19), a brief article announces our doctoral program in environmental science and engineering. Unfortunately, it is not clear from the article that this program has not yet received the required academic and administrative approvals. Our target date for beginning approved operation of this program is September 1972. The students mentioned are actually enrolled in regular programs and, by agreement with the various departments, are informally affiliated with (and assisting in the development of) the embryonic program.

C. S. Foote, Professor of Chemistry

W. F. Libby, Director, Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics, University of California, Los Angeles

Final word on Taylor

SIRS: Your Nov. 15, 1971, issue (page 6) contains letters from Dr. Gabor and Dr. Blodgett commenting critically on the Taylor family picture in the Oct. 11, 1971, issue, and on the size of the Taylor family itself. I understand the doctors as stating that a number of the Taylor children should never have been born. No person has the right to say this to another. Life is a mystery, but I believe that every individual is incapable of imagining the nothingness of not having experienced it. If there is such a person, he should wish it only for himself.

Walter C. Broad

Midland, Mich.

Editor's note. With publication of the above letter re Dr. Taylor and his family and comments on the subject, we will draw to a close this particular discussion so we may get on with other topics.

For shorter work week

SIRS: Just a note to second the comments of Donald B. Miller (C&EN, Sept. 13, 1971, pages 65 and 66). Unemployment is likely to be a problem for chemists for some time, and a shorter work week is much better than higher unemployment. In fact it may turn out to be—not the lesser of two evils but rather a positive good! Use ACS influence to promote it.

James E. Blair

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