

REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MANUFACTURING CHEMISTS ASSOCIATION

J. RICHARD WHITE, CHAIRMAN
EDUCATION ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 12, 1976

Liaison with educators has been an objective of the Education Activities Committee from its earliest days.

An important example from the very recent past illustrates our ability to mobilize key academic publics on very short notice to assist the Association in influencing legislation vital to the industry. We were able to recruit support because we have sponsored one of the prestigious academic programs available to teachers of chemistry and chemical engineering for more than 20 years.

When the Special Committee on Toxic Substances Legislation was marshalling all available forces to support constructive toxic substances control legislation, all MCA Teacher Award recipients received materials prepared by the special committee. The medalists were asked to contact their senators and congressmen if they concurred with MCA's position. The feedback was very gratifying, indeed. A significant number of the award winners sent strong letters to legislators. One letter in particular was so strong and supportive of the MCA position that MCA requested and received authority from the author to release the letter to the public in any manner to further our objectives. Many of the medalists expressed concern that the toxic substances legislation under consideration last winter would lead to an overkill impairing seriously academic and industrial research. Three of the medalists are editors of major academic journals and welcomed the material as background information for their editorial work. Though it is impossible to determine classroom utilization of our material on toxic substances, feedback indicates it was extensive. Quite clearly, our exposure to top flight people in education is extensive and mutually beneficial.

In addition, at MCA education exhibits MCA material on toxic substances and fluorocarbons was made available to more than 22,000 public school board members and superintendents attending the National School Boards Association Convention and to more than 7,000 science teachers at the National Science Teachers Association Convention. Personnel from member companies assisted MCA staff members at these exhibits and discussed these issues with visitors to the MCA booth.

Though our committee objective is primarily academic, we constantly reevaluate our programs in the light of communication linkages we establish -- and there is every indication that teachers welcome this PR aspect of our efforts. Several years ago we judged that our contact with administrators in the two-year colleges and secondary schools was somewhat deficient. We are in the midst of a program to extend our exposure and our influence with these publics.

We anticipate that our enlarged communications network will enhance the academic effectiveness of our programs and establish additional loyal publics to serve you on short term notice in causes vital to the industry.

In the nine months since my predecessor reported to you last January, we have initiated liaison with two entirely new publics -- public school board members and community college trustees. At MCA exhibits to each group, we promoted MCA programs and publications and initiated new communications linkages. We selected these two groups because these board members and trustees hail, for the most part, from the private sector, serve without pay and are the effective decision influencers in education.

Through previous occasional contact with the two-year college professors and presidents we had been unable to exploit constructively the full academic as well as communication impact of our awards program. Now, MCA is in a unique position in the community college scene. We offer the only national award available exclusively to two-year college professors in any field. The trustees and their association have received our liaison enthusiastically and assure their keen interest in promoting MCA education services.

On the high school level MCA has extensive contact on the individual basis and enjoys substantial credibility among teachers. However, politics and petty jealousies hampered our efforts to generate a desirable minimum number of nominations for our high school awards. An initial contact with superintendents last year increased the number of 1976 nominations five-fold over 1975. The recent promotion through the board members assures us that we can maintain the momentum.

Our contact with elementary school education is minimal. Yet, it is in these early years of schooling that lasting attitudes are formed toward industry and careers in it. An industry newsletter to elementary school teachers is on the drawing boards. We currently study the potential audience, content and impact of such an effort.

For the past six years we have been guided by the directive of Mr. Driver and your predecessors on the MCA board to collaborate with other associations so as to avoid competition or duplication of effort. Two collaborative efforts are in progress.

The American Chemical Society Committee on Professional Training with help from our committee surveyed recipients of terminal M.S. degrees in chemistry. A questionnaire with questions on job satisfaction, professional advancement and professional competence was distributed to all MCA member companies. More than 60 companies and 650 individuals contributed information for this important survey. The ACS committee is now interpreting the results. As you can imagine, some responses were quite negative. However, the majority responded most constructively. The results will form the basis for recommendations on curriculum innovation and development on the graduate and professional levels of training chemists. We anticipate member companies will find the results helpful in formulating job descriptions and evaluating recruits on the M.S. level.

This year the committee assumed a strong position of leadership in a collaborative effort, now in its 11th year, with the Industrial Research Institute in organizing the Visiting Industrial Scientist/Engineer Program. This program sponsors at the expense of participating member companies more than 200 visits by technical people from industry to college campuses. This year our committee and the MCA staff contributed substantial PR guidance and writing services to assure highest professional credibility of this program among company executives and college professors. Many of you received letters from Mr. Driver inviting your company to participate in this important information and image-building service. I do hope many of you were able to participate in this important and highly successful bridge-building effort. I have informational fliers available here for distribution.

Sidney Marland, former U.S. Commissioner of Education, plunged us into the age of career education. The concept and thrust of this trend generate confusion, to be sure. Yet, the movement is upon us and, to all appearances, will require increased industrial contribution to and participation in the educational process. The anticipated result should be a new generation of recruits educated in contact with the real world of work and, in the long run, reduce recruitment and retraining cost for companies. A representative of our committee was on the advance planning task force for the U.S. Commissioner's Conference on Career Education (one of the events scheduled for the bicentennial year) to be held next month in Houston. It is quite opportune that your Program Committee recognized the importance of technical education and selected Dr. Norman Hackerman, president of Rice University, to address you on this important subject at the MCA Semiannual Meeting next month.

The committee is surveying possible contribution to the education of minorities to meet long-range recruitment quotas for the industry. A task force surveyed programs of other associations and the needs of MCA member companies. They will present specific recommendations shortly for committee action and for collaboration with other associations.

Parenthetically, I might add, the committee has had insignificant difficulty with equal opportunities in the MCA Teacher Awards. Yet, among our 98 national teacher medalists, there are only three women and four blacks. To be sure, there have been a few objections from academia. We respond that recipients of MCA awards must be determined on the basis of performance rather than allocation to special interest groups. In each case the objection vanished and we've had another occasion for important dialogue on an emotion-charged subject at the grassroots level of opinion influencers.

In closing, I would like to note that our career guidance booklet Your Tomorrow--A Guide to Careers in the Chemical Industry continues to be popular. More than 20,000 copies have been distributed since last January. Since this booklet is designed for the student, it gives our industry and careers in it high visibility among students, especially on the secondary level.

Our committee's promotional efforts continue to generate the largest number of new subscriptions, approximately 100 per month, for MCA's influential environmental newsletter, ChemEcology. Educators already constitute the largest single reading public for this newsletter. A significant influx of new subscriptions is anticipated as a result of the five upcoming fall 1976 education exhibits.

Thank you for the opportunity of reporting to you. I will try to answer any questions you might have now or later in our gathering before lunch.

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