

CHIMIA Is 50 Years Old!

CHIMIA Today and Chemistry in Switzerland Tomorrow

EDITORIAL

Getting older is not a shame, neither for humans nor for chemistry journals. By today's standards, 50 years is not really old for an individual and certainly not for a journal where no natural life span is programmed. But as it is the case for individuals, the 50th birthday is an occasion to look back, to assess the present state, and to look forward and make plans for the future. The success-story of the first 50 years has been described in the Editorial of CHIMIA 12/95 by Prof. *Hans-Jürgen Hansen* (*Chimia* **1995**, 49, 475) in a concise and informative way, and it is now my turn to assess the present state of CHIMIA and to try to have a look into the future.

Today CHIMIA has a triple function:

- It is the official publication channel for the New Swiss Chemical Society, its sections and its member societies.
- It informs the members of the New Swiss Chemical Society who all obtain CHIMIA, and a much larger chemical public (in addition to the members, CHIMIA has *ca.* 300 subscribers, most of them libraries) about general chemistry related news in Switzerland and in the world.
- Finally it informs its readers in a selective way about scientific and industrial developments in general. CHIMIA is reviewed by *Chemical Abstracts* and an article published in this journal can, therefore, be quoted as a scientific paper.

We have many indications that CHIMIA presently has a high acceptance and it is considered by many to be one of the leading journals of its kind. CHIMIA has a dynamic editorial board and it has a highly experienced and motivated editor in the person of Prof. *Camille Ganter*. His devotion is acknowledged by everybody who is in contact with him. The New Swiss Chemical Society is happy that the heritage of CHIMIA has turned out to be one of the important assets of the New Society. This is an opportunity to thank *Camille Ganter* and the editorial board for their work, and to wish them continued success.

The future of CHIMIA, however, is strongly influenced by the future of Chemistry in Switzerland. Besides a *high quality education and a top level basic research at the University level*, there are two prerequisites, which are not independent from each other, for a bright future of Chemistry:

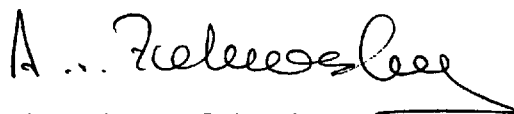
- We need an education of high quality of young people in schools that informs a large part of the population about what chemistry is all about.
- We need a chemical industry, which relies on the human resources and on good general conditions for industrial activities, in order to continue with the development of products of high complexity.

The education in schools is a continuous effort which hopefully diminishes the prejudices in the population against chemistry and at the same time motivates a sufficient number of young people to contribute themselves in a responsible way to the development of chemistry. We are confident that the members of our member Society 'Verein Schweizerischer Naturwissenschaftslehrer' (CHIMIA 9/95), will go on in their difficult efforts to defend chemistry in the *curricula* of our schools.

We chemists are aware that the future of our profession in this country is much less assured today than it was 30, 20, or even 10 years ago. Today we have to fight for the future of Chemistry in Switzerland, and I am sure that most of us want to fight, because we are convinced that Chemistry contributes in such an important and positive way to modern society and culture.

Unfortunately, Chemistry is attacked openly, or disguisedly, often in a way that has a strongly ideological, or even fundamentalist character. I am convinced that we as chemists can contribute considerably to the information of the general public. We should also not forget that Chemistry today does not stand alone as a science. Progress is only possible, if several basic conditions are fulfilled, especially the freedom to apply all scientific knowledge in a responsible way. There will be very important political decisions in the near future, which will be crucial for the further development of chemistry in Switzerland. The acceptance of the *Initiative for the Protection of Genes, e.g.*, would withdraw one of the most important instruments for research and progress in chemistry for academia and industry. As it is the case with words, scientific knowledge should not be, and finally cannot be censored.

We as chemists should be aware of these dangers and contribute to the discussion by convincing as many as possible of our fellow citizens that we are not acting in a selfish or in an irresponsible way, if we try to give our researchers the possibility to use contemporary tools for their work for the benefit of mankind, and of our society. We should make clear to them that censorship has never really resolved any problems. If we fail, chemistry in Switzerland, and with it CHIMIA, may be highly endangered. Personally, I am optimistic that direct democracy, once again, will arrive at a good end. Yet we have to fight for it.



Alexander von Zelewsky
President NSCS