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Introduction to Symposium on New Methods of Separation

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INTRODUCTION TO SYMPOSIUM ON NEW METHODS OF SEPARATION

There is hardly a branch of the physical and biological sciences that does not use at least one form of separation method. An organic chemist needs to separate the products of his reaction; a biologist needs to purify some enzymes or proteins; a chemical engineer needs to recover, on a large scale, some petroleum fraction; etc. All too frequently, however, scientists of different discipline tend to (a) overlook separation methods developed by other disciplines and (b) develop their own notations and jargon which makes cross-fertilization a bit more difficult. Thus, as an example, what the biologists call gel filtration the polymer chemists call gel permeation. While it is true that the nature of the column peaking might be different when used by the two groups, the separation mechanism is usually identical. It is also true that frequently a lack of understanding exists between various branches of science. The chemist may have no conception of what the mining engineer is up against and vice versa.

It is clear, then, that it is highly desirable for scientists from various disciplines to get together to exchange opinions, knowledge, interests, and to stimulate one another. It was with this interest in mind that the symposium on New Methods of Separation, which took place during the 167th National American Chemical Society Meeting in Los Angeles, California, was organized. The participants were from various areas of science and the topics included many separation techniques, as can be seen from the papers published here.

It is my belief that a common thread runs through most of the separation techniques. I am rather certain that I am not alone in this belief (see, for example, C. J. King's paper). Hence symposiums such as this serve a very useful purpose. That is, to unify the field of separation. The more one knows about different techniques and other approaches to separation, the closer one is to a better understanding of the field as a whole.

It is hoped that the following papers will interest and stimulate all scientists. If this symposium caused some workers to try a separation method previously not used by them, then we have accomplished at least part of our goals.

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