

## SENESCENCE: THE ENEMY OF PROGRESS

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Consideration should be given to a problem that may be more significant than any other single factor in retarding progress in chemistry and chemical education. This is the overwhelming influence of *old* people in the rendering of decisions for the support of science. The fact of the matter is that the mean age of this particular Conference is at least 15 years greater than it should be.

I am impressed with some of the comments made about the progress of technical men in industry. There is an obvious attractiveness to a system in which people move from one kind of work to another, since this may preserve both the man and the institution. By way of contrast the style of the international academic community is to decree that a man is either a professor for life or a failure. I believe that a large number of the senior professors in all fields of learning are thoroughly bored with their work and that they should be given easy opportunity to retire from academic work and find other fields in which they can experience renewal of their creative faculties at a relatively early age, such as 50 years. Not all should take this course, but it should be an easy and normally acceptable procedure.

One result would be that planning by groups such as this Conference would be done by people who view the future as almost infinite in duration. Another advantage would be a trend toward teaching of students by faculty members who are more nearly a peer group and share with students the view that intellectual horizons are still expanding. Finally, we could avoid the situation in which research, money and facilities are monopolized to a dangerous extent by established men who continue to do the same kind of work that made them eminent 20 years ago. The work usually continues to be good, but often does not really have the novelty and forward thrust offered by the programmes of some of their struggling young colleagues.