

FIRST DECADE OF THE AMERICAN PHYTOPATHOLOGICAL SOCIETY¹

C. L. SHEAR

We meet tonight in the city in which the Society was organized ten years ago to celebrate the completion of the first decade of our existence.

The development of botany in general and of phytopathology in particular has been so rapid in recent years that except for Professor Whetzel's fine sketch no one has stopped to record its history. Most phases of history can be best interpreted by retrospect, but it is important that exact records of the facts as they occurred be available for a proper interpretation by future writers.

The Botanical Society has a standing rule that "The secretary be instructed to prepare once each decade a brief historic sketch of the Society." I think the pathologists might well adopt a similar practice. The present account we trust will serve to establish a precedent which will be followed by this Society in the future.

The origin and evolution of scientific societies is a vast and complicated subject, which has never been specially treated, so far as we are aware, and I will hasten to say for the consolation of those present that I do not propose to undertake the task this evening.

It is generally agreed by scientists, I believe, that if an organ or organization appears before conditions and environment are suitable for its use and development it is doomed to discouragement or disaster. A striking illustration of this is found in the recent history of Russia. The attempt to change suddenly from an autocracy to a democracy resulted in the dire disaster about which we have as yet had only scanty information, but the horrors of which I fear none of us can realize.

The rapid development and success of our Society appear to be sufficient evidence that it was organized at a time when conditions were favorable and there was a real need for such an organization.

During the summer and autumn of 1908 the writer suggested to several of his colleagues in the Bureau of Plant Industry, especially Mr. W. M. Scott and Dr. Wm. A. Orton, the desirability of an organization of plant pathologists. We also had some correspondence in regard to the matter with Dr. L. R. Jones and others. As a result, a meeting of the Patholo-

¹Read at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the American Phytopathological Society, Baltimore, Md., December 25, 1918.

gists of the Department of Agriculture was called December 15, 1908. The report of this meeting is as follows:

Report of Meeting of Plant Pathologists Held at the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., December 15, 1908, for the Purpose of Undertaking the Organization of an American Phytopathological Society

The meeting was called to order by the writer, who stated briefly the purpose, and nominated Mr. W. M. Scott as chairman. Mr. Scott was unanimously elected chairman and C. L. Shear secretary of the meeting. The secretary offered the following resolution:

Resolved, That it is the sense of this meeting that an association of plant pathologists be organized.

Dr. E. F. Smith inquired as to the scope and membership of the proposed society. The prevailing opinion, as expressed, seemed to be that the society should be very broad in its scope and should admit to membership all persons engaged in phytopathological work.

The resolution was then adopted. A motion was then made that a committee of three be appointed by the chairman to communicate with the plant pathologists of the country and make preliminary arrangements for the organization of such a society at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to be held in Baltimore from December 28th, 1908, to January 2, 1909. This motion was carried and the chairman appointed as members of the committee C. L. Shear, Donald Reddick, and W. A. Orton.

Dr. Smith suggested that as one of the important questions in connection with the new society would be the best time and place of meeting, it was his opinion that it might take place in connection with the annual meeting of the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations.

Meeting adjourned.

(Signed) C. L. SHEAR,
Secretary.

The Committee on Organization acted at once and prepared the following letter, which was sent to one hundred and thirty pathologists or persons interested in the subject:

Washington, D. C.,
December 16, 1908.

At a meeting of plant pathologists held at Washington, D. C., December 15, 1908, and after consultation with several experiment station pathologists, it was unanimously decided that an effort should be made to organize an American pathological society. The undersigned were appointed a committee to arrange for a preliminary meeting in connection with the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Baltimore.

You are cordially invited to be present December 30, 1908, at an hour and place to be announced later, and take part in the organization of the proposed society, which it is believed can exercise great influence in advancing the study of phytopathology in America. If impossible for you to be present will you kindly inform

the committee whether you would be willing to join such a society and also what you think should be its policy with regard to time and place of meetings.

C. L. SHEAR,
DONALD REDDICK,
W. A. ORTON,
Committee.

In response to this call fifty-four persons met at the Eastern High School on the date mentioned. The following report of the Committee on Organization was read:

Report of Committee on Organization of an American Phytopathological Society Presented at Baltimore meeting December 30, 1908

At a meeting of plant pathologists, which was held at Washington, D. C., December 15, 1908, after consultation and correspondence with several experiment station pathologists a Committee was appointed to take preliminary steps toward the organization of an American Phytopathological Society. This committee begs to submit the following report:

In accordance with instructions the Committee sent out a letter of announcement and invitation to the accompanying list of one hundred and thirty plant pathologists, requesting those who could not be present to state whether they would be willing to join the proposed society and what they considered the best time and place of meeting. Replies show that the majority are in favor of meeting with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. No one from whom an answer was received disapproved of the organization of the proposed society.

The Committee recommends that temporary organization of the society be effected at once by the selection of a president, secretary-treasurer, and three members of a council, one for three years, one for two, and one for one, and that the full council, consisting of the president, secretary-treasurer, and the three elected members, be instructed to draft a constitution and by-laws for the society and also take under consideration and report recommendations in regard to other important matters.

The question of time and place of annual meeting is one which can perhaps be determined at present. Another question for consideration is the status of the organization—whether it shall be purely official, as the association of agricultural chemists, or otherwise. The question of publication will also need consideration—whether the society should undertake the publication of a journal, as is done by the Economic Entomologists. It is our opinion that an American Phytopathological Society, placed upon a broad and generous foundation, may be of invaluable aid in promoting the future development of this important and rapidly growing subject in America, and that its influence may be made of international importance. The questions regarding the dissemination and spread of plant diseases, whether from farm to farm, from State to State, or from one country to another, and the most efficient steps which may be taken to prevent their spread, are subjects which we believe should be considered by the society. The subject of courses of study in plant pathology, and the necessary requirements would also be worthy of consideration. The society should also be able in many other ways to direct and advance sound pathological work in America.

Your Committee recommends that the organization be known as The American Phytopathological Society, and that all plant pathologists present, and all of those to whom the invitation to attend this meeting was sent, who shall sign the constitution and by-laws and pay the necessary membership fee, shall be regarded as charter members of the society.

C. L. SHEAR,
DONALD REDDICK,
W. A. ORTON,
Committee.

Temporary organization of the meeting was effected by the election of A. D. Selby as chairman and Donald Reddick, as secretary, and a motion made to adopt the report of the Committee and proceed to organize the society. This was followed, as those who were present will recall, by an animated discussion regarding the desirability of starting a new society. A few speakers opposed the proposition as being detrimental to the advancement of botanical unity and organization.

The three previous botanical organizations had recently combined into the present Botanical Society of America and it appeared to some that the organization of a new society was a retrograde movement. The advocates of the new society maintained that the aims and purposes of the proposed organization, as set forth in the Committee's report, could not be attained without a separate society.

After full discussion the motion was carried by a vote of thirty-two to twelve, and temporary organization of the society was effected by the election of L. R. Jones, president; A. D. Selby, vice president; C. L. Shear, secretary-treasurer; J. B. S. Norton and B. M. Duggar, councilors.

The council was instructed to consider and make recommendations in regard to the permanent organization, policy, and affiliation of the society, and to arrange for the next meeting. A brief report of the Baltimore meeting was published in *Science*,² under the head "Science Notes and News."

The council held a meeting in Washington March 26-27, 1909, and carefully considered the question of affiliation of the society and the possibilities of establishing a journal. It was decided to hold the first regular meeting in Boston December 28-31 in connection with the American Association for the Advancement of Science and to recommend the publication of a phytopathological journal. The various possibilities of such affiliation with existing organizations, as division, section, or branch, as would admit of sufficient autonomy to accomplish the fundamental and essential purposes of the phytopathologists, and at the same time eliminate as far as possible conflicts in meetings and programs, were thoroughly

² *Science* n.s., 29: 179, Jan. 29, 1909.

discussed by the council and with officers of the other botanical organizations, and it was finally decided best to remain a separate society, but to affiliate and cooperate as closely as possible with the Botanical Society and Section G of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The following paragraph from the letter of invitation to pathologists, dated October 25, 1909, shows how modest our financial requirements were:

I am instructed by the council of the American Phytopathological Society to invite you to become a charter member of the society. Please signify your acceptance of the invitation by remitting to the secretary-treasurer 50 cents by post-office money order, to be used in defraying the expenses of the society this year.

The Boston meeting, a condensed report of which was published in *Science*,³ was generally acclaimed a great success.

Most of those who were in doubt as to the advisability of organizing a new society or who were openly opposed to it at Baltimore, frankly stated "that the large membership list, the numerous papers presented, and the great enthusiasm showed by the men had thoroughly convinced them that the organization of the Society was fully justified."⁴

The most important business transacted at this meeting was the action of the Society in directing the council "to consider the establishment of a society journal devoted to phytopathology, and to proceed with its publication whenever in its judgment sufficient support is assured." Dr. Jones has already told the story of the Journal.

Our history since has been one of rapid and successful development, with just enough friendly rivalry and difference of opinion to prove stimulating and to promote the progress of science and the Society. Beginning with one hundred and thirty Charter Members we have now nearly reached four hundred. The principal records of our history since the Boston meeting are to be found in the annual reports published in *Phytopathology*.

So much for the past! May I not be permitted a few words in regard to the present and future.

This is the greatest epoch in the history of the world; the greatest catastrophe followed by the greatest opportunity. New foundations for the future structure of science, ethics and politics are to be built. A new spirit of brotherly love and service must pervade our activities in science as well as in all other lines, else the future structure will be but another tower of Babel whose downfall may be greater than the present.

³ *Science*, n.s., **31**: 742-757, March 13, 1910.

⁴ Quotation from unpublished portion of report of Boston meeting.

Science like all other agencies is equally potent for good or evil. No more appalling demonstration of this can be imagined than that which the world has just witnessed. With proper aims and motives it may be of the greatest usefulness in aiding and improving mankind.

In closing this sketch it seems fitting to call attention to what we believe to be some of the important opportunities and obligations which present themselves to us as scientists and men at this time.

In the first place, we believe there will be great need during the reconstruction period and the future for the most active international organization and coöperation of pathologists as well as other scientists. A great international pathological society could accomplish much in advancing research and in helping to solve many problems of worldwide importance. Steps should be taken to confer with our colleagues in other countries in regard to the possibilities of some closer union of interests and organizations. Our Canadian friends have already taken steps to become affiliated with us and the conditions appear propitious for closer coöperation and coördination of the common interests and aims and mutual benefit of pathologists throughout the world. The strength which would come from such union would be of inestimable value in increasing the efficiency and usefulness of pathological work and promoting the solution of the many important international problems connected with research, quarantine, inspection, and disease surveys; while exchange of information, specimens, and cultures could be greatly facilitated and closer and more sympathetic relations established which would greatly advance our knowledge and usefulness to mankind, create a greater interest in and appreciation of our work and secure greater encouragement and support for research.

In our relations to each other and to the general public great good can be accomplished by closer coöperative efforts, broader and deeper interests in public affairs and a greater exhibition of the truth and justice for which true science should stand.

Let us not be among the last of the groups of scientists who shall accept the great responsibility and improve the wonderful opportunity now offered for world service in advancing science and promoting the brotherhood of mankind.

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D. C.