

FOREWORD

If one word had to be chosen to describe the oil shale situation, I believe that word would be "change." From one year to the next, there are significant changes in the political, economic, environmental, and social aspects of the industry. In the early 1970s, the environmental viewpoints not only changed 180 degrees but their impacts on oil shale development became more significant by many orders of magnitude. In addition to this, the political atmosphere changed from one of encouragement to one of laws and regulations designed to prevent development.

There was a slow amelioration of these impacts during the latter part of the 1970s, and, in the last year of the Carter administration, programs were initiated to provide economic support for programs to commercialize shale oil production. The change in administrations caused a change in emphasis and the apparent direction now is to greater reliance on private funds and development.

The continued increases in fuel costs and inflation have had mixed influences on the economic viability of shale oil production, but present indicators point strongly to expansion of pilot plant processes to commercial size operations. Unless there are major unforeseen impacts on the construction and development phases now underway, there should be a production of 50,000 to 90,000 barrels per day of shale oil by the mid-1980s. Only then will the real problems associated with commercial shale oil production be known. Major problems, if any, may be entirely unexpected while those predicted today may turn out not to be problems at all. If the latter is the case, the papers presented at this symposium may have been a major factor of prevention because many deal with potential problems and their solutions.

As is usually the case, the values of the symposium and its proceedings are due to the efforts of the participants: the authors presenting papers, their companies who encouraged them in their work, and the attendees who participated in discussions. These efforts are very much appreciated.

James H. Gary
Professor of Chemical and Petroleum-
Refining Engineering