

FOREWORD

The oil shale industry is at the same level of activity it was in the late 1960's. With crude oil in plentiful supply and at low prices there is no feel of urgency to develop a viable synfuels program. In addition, most petroleum companies are severely restricting their research and development programs and the federal government is concerned with cutting spending. As a result most programs have been phased out and the only program still active for western oil shales is that of Union Oil Company at Parachute, Colorado. These conditions affected the 19th Oil Shale Symposium in both attendance and the number of papers available for the sessions. To maintain the quality of the program, it was necessary to restrict the program to two days but the resulting program was exceptionally good. The total attendance was 97 which compares with 389 for the best attended symposium and 83 for the smallest.

Unfortunately, both government and industry have very short memories and resort to short-term planning. This has resulted in the rollercoaster history of the shale oil industry. Whenever there is a shortage of petroleum, crash research and development programs are initiated and everyone gets into the act. Later, when crude oil becomes more available, these programs are phased out and the expertise developed is allowed to dissipate. In the long run this is very costly to industry and the government because much of the same work is repeated and new people have to be educated to the needs of the industry. Hopefully, the Oil Shale Symposia will ameliorate some of this loss of expertise by making available the results of much of this work to future workers. Even so, many companies do not permit the presentation of the results of their work because of their concern for divulging proprietary information to their competitors. In many cases this concern is unwarranted and later may work to their disadvantage because it is not available for their own use. Unless there are definite reasons for withholding data, it is to everyone's benefit to publish as much as possible.

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If sufficient good papers are forthcoming, the 20th Oil Shale Symposium will be held on the Mines campus on April 21-22, 1987. I hope to see you here.

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and Petroleum Refining