This is our first sister organization, planned similarly to the Potato Association of America, and therefore, worthy of our support, interest and cooperation. It will make it possible for us to become better informed of the research and other activities conducted in the European countries and I'm sure all of you, like myself, cordially welcome this new organization and its members into the organized potato field. On behalf of the Potato Association of America I extend to them our heartiest greeting and wishes for a long and highly successful future.

Ora Smith

SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF COOKING QUALITY CONTROL IN POTATOES

REPORT OF NUTRITION COMMITTEE, POTATO ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Superior cooking quality in potatoes, under our present system of marketing today, is a one-sided benefit to the consumer and of little profit to the producer. Unless a potato grower markets his crop under his own brand name or sells it to potato processors, any direct benefit due him from high cooking quality of his crop is practically lost. With one notable exception, “table stock” is marketed under general classifications such as “round whites, Katahdin-type, etc. and rarely is there even a variety designation. No milk dealer would think of buying milk without a butterfat test, but potatoes for the most part are marketed without regard to one of their most important characteristics—cooking quality.

YIELD AND GRADE PARAMOUNT

By and large, the marketing system being what it is, there is little incentive to place cooking quality above yield and grade. Moreover, since public opinion varies considerably as to just what is wanted in cooking quality it would, at present, be very difficult for a grower to decide, without careful study of the market, what cooking quality to aim for. From the consumer’s standpoint, housewives will tell you that they prefer Long Island potatoes or Maine potatoes or Idaho bakers, but the variety and grower’s name are unknown to them. Consequently if they happen to buy potatoes that cook and taste to suit them there is no way at present for them to exercise their preference another time, except by regional choice. Potato growers themselves often have a variety preference based on cooking quality which accounts for the existence of what might be called a “Potato grower’s potato”. For example, a grower may raise Katahdins, Sebagos, or Chippewas for market but for his own table he grows a patch of another variety, more to his liking.

PROCESSED POTATOES AN EXCEPTION

In the case of potatoes for processing, the manufacturers do have an opportunity to exercise preference, but even such preference is sometimes limited by seasonal fluctuations in yield caused by disease, weather, and other factors affecting supply. Furthermore, since potato processors usually buy in large quantities at the production source they can, by careful inspec-
tion of the crop, preliminary specific gravity tests, cooking tests, etc., make fairly certain they are getting the quality they need for their product. Sections of potato-growing regions that produce suitable processing potatoes for particular purposes are well known to large manufacturers.

**Quality Improvement Largely a Matter of Education**

It can be stated with assurance that any research program aimed at improvement and reasonable control of cooking quality in potatoes will fall far short of expectations unless it is coordinated with an educational program for growers. Growers can be expected to respond to a quality improvement program if they are given a price incentive, especially if the program also provides for identification and transport of the higher quality product directly to the consumer. Much of the practical information required to initiate such a program is already known or is in print. At present it seems to be largely a problem that can be properly handled by extension workers and marketing specialists. They should be able to make the necessary decisions regarding the kinds of quality preferred by the consumer and the best means of getting it to him.

**What is Quality?**

Although we ordinarily refer to quality in potatoes as a specific characteristic, it is well established that desirable culinary quality can mean several things to several people. That is one reason why it is so important to arrive at definite decisions regarding what quality or qualities need improvement before research can be initiated to find ways of improving them. In all fairness to potato growers and shippers and also retailers, it should be stated that the general appearance, and to a large degree, the cooking quality of potatoes being sold on many retail markets have markedly improved during the last two years. This is also to the credit of the potato breeder who has been severely criticised recently in some quarters for selecting for shape, shallow eyes, and disease resistance at the expense of quality and flavor.

**Cooking Quality and Flavor a Paradox**

Until definite decisions are made regarding which specific qualities are to be improved the task of deciding the best means to make them cannot be undertaken in a realistic manner enabling reproduction with reasonable assurance. As one attempts to dissect the components of culinary quality and palatability in potatoes, the problem of control appears to be more and more a paradox. Each factor seems to constitute a variable element in a greater complex of elements. The more one strives to understand the factors that interact to make good quality the more he is impressed by the seeming futility of attempting to control and predict quality. A rational approach to the study leads inevitably to the conclusion that quality is an equilibrium of a combination of factors and not one factor alone. Yet one factor, if abnormal, can have a controlling influence on the resulting quality.

**Specific Troubles**

In some potato sections, however, specific troubles crop up from time to time to cause poor quality. One of these is the occurrence of hard spots