

*Howard Greer*

# **PROCEEDINGS**

## **Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Southern Weed Conference**

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*Howard Greer*

## Presidential Address

### THE RELEVANCE OF THE REGIONAL TO WEED SCIENCE

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In league with approximately 12 of my predecessors, I too have faced the question, "What in the world can I as President, say to the Southern Weed Conference this year?" Each of us, I suppose, have wanted to leave something of a profound nature and of infinite wisdom in the minds of our hearers. So I thought to myself, "What about your profession - what noble qualities are inherent in what you do?" For a moment, I thought I had it - a starting place at last! Then I thought of my wife's response to the question often asked of her by those newly-met, "And what does your husband do?" "Oh, he kills weeds for a living!" Needless to say, I was back at the starting point again.

As President, it seemed only natural to look at the Conference itself, to discover new truths about it; only to find that Presidents Ennis, Behrens, Darrow, and Porter had the same idea before me. Since I am not to be easily deterred, however, (and since I didn't have any good alternative subjects) I decided to plunge right in with the afore-mentioned, illustrious crowd. Yet it wasn't a really hard decision to make for I realized that I owed a tremendous debt to this Conference, in the association made with people, ideas gained which have added immeasurably to my own research program, and probably more importantly, in the fast friendships made here. Let this be then, if you will, a small statement of my own personal belief in SWC as an organization and in the people of whom she is comprised. Yet, too, let this be a statement made about the SWC which is representative of my understanding of the importance of the Regional Conference to the entire discipline of Weed Science, for I believe these Conferences may be standing at a sort of crossroads in their existence, and need the constructive thinking of many if they are to find the correct path into the future.

So now to the topic - "The Relevance of the Regional to Weed Science". It seems to have been the vogue for some little time for a speaker to introduce his topic by defining his terms. Turning to Webster, we find that the word "relevant" means "bearing upon, properly applying to the case in hand, or pertinent." The "case in hand", of course, is Weed Science. My hypothesis will be that the Regional Conferences, and specifically SWC are pertinent to Weed Science. A valid question may be raised at this point, as to whether the word "relevant" is a strong enough one to use in arguing the case. Let us make the attempt, however.

A bit of history may serve us here in gaining an understanding as to how this all started. Most of the regional conferences were established, as you will recall, shortly after World War II - a period of time which saw the emergence of the possibility of using chemicals as an integrated and established tool for absolutely controlling the pernicious weed. It is easy to understand, that in the lack of cohesiveness of trained scientists in this new discipline,

there would be a banding together of those interested in these new possibilities. Knowledge surrounding this new science was fragmentary, yet the imperative of bringing order to the adapting of these revolutionary and new techniques was obvious. So it seems only natural that those persons interested and responsible for fitting these new concepts to their respective systems of agriculture, public utilities, and waterways in their particular area where environment and climate was uniquely different from other areas of the country, would come together in a mutual attempt to share their knowledge and to learn of others. In the case of SWC this first occurred with a small group of men meeting in 1948 at the Delta Experiment Station, Stoneville, Mississippi. A few of you here today, possibly, attended that first meeting.

Somewhat parenthetically, I would digress a bit to say that surely those first members of SWC must have felt the same frustrations that most of us have in understanding themselves to be part of a new scientific discipline; a frustration borne out in the fact that until recently, we didn't even know what to call ourselves! In my mind a most wise decision was made and announced last year by the Weed Society of America, in naming our discipline "Weed Science". Those of you who may also call yourselves "Agronomists" or even "Horticulturists" have probably experienced the same frustration that I have on seeing the blank looks on the faces of those confronted with these terms for the first time. How much better for us to describe ourselves as "Weed Scientists" rather than "Weedologists" or "Agriophytologists"!

Earlier I mentioned some of my predecessors in the office of President of SWC. I would like to refer briefly, at this point, to the address given by one of them, Bill Ennis, in 1954<sup>1</sup>. Actually, his was only the second such address given to this Conference, the first one, a year earlier, by Dale Hinkle. A small plug might be in order here in stating that Dr. Hinkle is the Chairman of my Department of Agronomy in Arkansas, and although no longer active in weed research, his interest in our field has been of immeasurable help to me in establishing such programs in Arkansas. Dr. Ennis' address concerned itself with taking a look at where the Conference had been at that point and where it was going, and in arguing my case for relevance, provides us with a unique opportunity to make some comparisons over a ten-year period, 1954-1964.

Statistics to some are dull, but since they are such an integral part of the tools of our trade, I'll not hesitate to use them, briefly. From a beginning registration of 73 at Stoneville in 1948, the Conference had grown in size to 303 members registered in 1954. Our attendance last year at Jackson, Mississippi was 675. It is of significance to note the emphasis that Bill Ennis placed upon the importance of industrial participation in our Conference. Of those registered that year, some 216 were from the private agencies, largely business and industry, 18 represented education (extension), 56 from research (both federal and state), and 13 represented other public agencies such as TVA, SCS, and the like. By 1964 the figures looked like this: 404 from private agencies, 23 from education, 125 from research, and 23 from other public agencies. The approximate doubling

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<sup>1</sup>W. B. Ennis, Jr. W's of the Southern Weed Conference. Proc. SWC 7:12-20. 1964.

in size of the Conference has come largely from industrial representation and from the research workers. A further example of the industrial interest in the Conference lies in the fact that some 89 companies were registered as Sustaining Members last year. No comparable figure can be given for 1954 since the Conference had no Sustaining Members at that time. Commercial exhibits were encouraged, however, and some 19 companies are listed in the Proceedings as having exhibits at the 1954 Conference.

It seems to me that we can interpret this ten-year growth as a sign that Weed Science is a healthy and vigorous field of endeavor in the Southern region. One possible exception to this statement lies in the field of education where the number of participants increased from 18 in 1954 to only 23 in 1964. Bob Darrow<sup>2</sup> commented on this situation in 1961 when he stated that: "Unfortunately, our state extension programs in weed and brush control as handled by the state agricultural extension services are not developed to the same extent that our research programs have been in many cases, and the number of extension weed control specialists is still pitifully small for the job to be done". Walter Porter<sup>3</sup> elaborated further upon the situation in 1962 when he said: "In the case of lack of extension participation, the reason is fairly clear. In most states the real need for full-time weed-control extension specialists has not been recognized; or, if it has been, little has been done to correct this deficiency. As a result, in most states part of the extension activity in weed control is directed by the crop specialist and part by research workers. This arrangement is far from ideal and does not provide the proper techniques for dissemination of weed-control knowledge." It seems clear from these two statements and the statistics just cited that increased extension activity, particularly from the standpoint of obtaining trained individuals as specialists, should continue to be encouraged by our Conference.

Comparisons other than those furnished by the citing of statistics are important to our consideration of the question of relevance. It must be remembered that in 1954 Weed Science was just emerging as a self-sustaining discipline, but still without a great amount of cohesiveness. In most state institutions where much of the agricultural research was carried on and graduate students trained, it was a stepchild of Agronomy, Horticulture, or Botany, according to where major programs of research were needed and first started. Admittedly, we haven't progressed much further than this 10 years later, and it will probably be some time before Weed Science is able to stand alone as an academic as well as a research field. Yet the fact that we are a recognized discipline is a tribute, I think, to the very instrumental role the regional conferences were playing in getting our science recognized on a national level. Many of you will remember, I am sure, the beginnings the present Weed Society of America had in the old association of regional conferences. A recognition of these beginnings is still to be found in the fact that each regional conference elects periodically a delegate to serve on the Executive Committee of WSA. Furthermore, considerable cooperation has existed between WSA and the regionals in the areas of standardiz-

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<sup>2</sup>Robert A. Darrow. Presidential Address. Proc. SWC 14:5-9. 1961.

<sup>3</sup>Walter K. Porter, Jr. What's next - what can the Southern Weed Conference do in the future? Proc. SWC 15:5-7. 1962.

ing terminology, in scheduling joint meetings with the regionals in the past, or in arranging times of meeting that were not excessively competitive with regional meetings.

Yet there are signs that to some suggest that the regional weed conferences are on the wane, or are becoming outmoded enough to question the validity of their existence. The proposed change in the frequency of WSA meetings is but one sign that has caused concern to some of us and which led last year to our Conference going on record as opposing annual meetings of WSA. Although such a schedule was announced at the WSA meeting last February, the Executive Board of SWC felt obligated to propose an amendment to the WSA Constitution providing for biennial meetings. Dr. Warren, President of WSA, has assured me that the membership of WSA will be polled by mail ballot in the near future to decide this vital question.

In still another vein there are those that feel that the regionals must find new ways of doing things, new formats, or perhaps as has been implied, ways to avoid being simply "little WSA's". The best example of this is to be noted this past month when the North Central Weed Control Conference, meeting in Lansing, Michigan, sponsored a program of panel discussions with no volunteer papers being given. Still another example has been the decision of at least two regional conferences to hold their meetings biennially during the alternate years that WSA was not meeting. It will be of interest to note how these decisions will be affected in the event the proposed annual meetings of the Society become reality. Fortunately, it seems to me, SWC affirmed some time ago the validity of holding an annual conference for its region.

It was precisely these considerations along with others that led to the selection of this topic for my address to you this year. It may well be that the items just cited are in themselves of not great enough importance to justify this concern. If so, then you may dismiss the foregoing remarks as simply the "soundings-off" of the President, using his prerogative to fill up 30 minutes time on the program. These remarks, however, lead me to make what I would call "a critical evaluation - 1965" in the time remaining.

It seemed significant to me that Dr. Ennis referred to the Preamble to the SWC Constitution in his 1954 evaluation. A re-statement of this Preamble at this time may also be helpful: "The Conference is established to bring together representatives of the Southern States of the U.S., Puerto Rico, and other states and areas, and agencies, institutions and persons who are directly interested or engaged in weed control through research, education, regulation, manufacturing, or merchandizing. The purpose is to exchange ideas, experiences, opinions and information, and discuss and plan means of securing more adequate weed control through more and better coorelated and coordinated efforts on weed research and control by Federal, State and local or private agencies." The valid question that could be raised now would be as to whether these statements are still applicable to our times and to our functions as a conference. My answer to such a question would be a resounding "yes" but I would also point out a possible difference in degree now as compared to the time the Preamble was first formulated.

I will use but two examples to point up what I mean. Turning again to

industrial representation at our Conference and examining the list of registrants last year, one is struck by the number of new firms dotting our lists. Closer examination would reveal the fact that many of these firms fall into the category of local distributor and in some cases formulator of agricultural chemicals. I think we all recognize that these concerns have emerged as a new force in the affairs of Weed Science. Many of them no longer depend solely upon the manufacturer's representatives for the field-servicing of products, but are themselves hiring trained people to assist in this endeavor. It is a source of considerable pride to me that many of these newer concerns have "discovered" SWC and found a place here to broaden and expand their concepts in this expanding field.

In still another example, the responsibility for the use and application of agricultural chemicals on some of the larger land holdings in our region, is devolving slowly upon one person. In many cases this person is spending more and more of his time on this one phase of the crop production activities of the concern he is associated with. Finding a need to supplement the information he can get from his County Agent, he turns to whatever source is available to him - many of these persons are now associated with this Conference. So it is in many areas - we could cite forestry companies, power districts, utilities, and many other concerns now regularly sending representatives to this Conference to learn and to share the practical problems arising in our field, and common to our region.

It would be valid, at this point, to raise still another question, "What do these people get from SWC that they couldn't get, for example, from WSA?" I think the point that I would make here is the fact that most of us have realized by now, whether consciously or not, that SWC, and indeed all of the regional conferences, are not merely "little WSA's" and that there is little danger of this type competition occurring. Rather, we who find ourselves arguing the case for the regionals would insist that the main difference is one of function. Without question, one of the main functions of WSA is to weld together, on a national level, those persons whose primary interest and training is in the field of Weed Science and to provide them with the high level of professional status necessary to the pursuit of their careers. WSA also provides a channel for the publication of finished research results in its publication "Weeds". The regional conferences, and including the Southern Weed Conference, have seen new functions emerge from the experience of the past years. This does not mean that we at this Conference are about to cast a vote of "no confidence" in WSA. Quite the contrary! I think all of us would agree that we need ever to affirm the need for a strong professional society undergirding our practice of the profession of Weed Science. Yet we must also recognize the fact that many of the members of SWC, having varied interests in other fields, will not always have a strong interest in WSA, and may participate in its activities to only a minor extent.

In closing, then, let me outline for you in three brief points what I interpret to be the unique functions for SWC - those things that "set it apart" and "justify" its existence if we have any need at all to do this. (1) SWC provides an annual forum, truly a "workers conference" where the county agent, the farmer, the farm manager, the manufacturer, the state and federal researcher,

the utility representative, the distributor or formulator, and others can all meet on a common ground in a mutual exchange of ideas - where they can discuss problems, that to a large extent, only occur on the regional level - and where preliminary research findings, not yet ready for final publication, can be heard and their implications discussed. (2) SWC can serve as an interpretive body to the general public living in the Southern States on matters pertaining to Weed Science, particularly in areas where the need for controlling weeds in a particular situation must be pinpointed and where the need for dependance upon chemical control measures must be interpreted to the public. That we have this responsibility could be well-illustrated by a casual perusal of the November, 1964 issue of "Bioscience", a special issue dealing with pesticides. This is the official publication of the American Institute of Biological Sciences. It is apparent from some of the articles that the "sniping" at the pesticide industry continues at an unabated pace and is no longer confined to the popular writers in the field of biological science but has been adopted by such professional biologists as Frank Egler and Stephen Collins, both of Connecticut. It is difficult to understand the fit of pique that invades the minds of such men, but can be easily illustrated by quoting Collins<sup>4</sup> as follows: "The temporary successes of agriculturists in controlling pests with persistent chemical pesticides from which they appear unable or unwilling to retreat and the steadily climbing sales of pesticides should not be permitted to blind society to their inherent flaw - their uncontrollable entry into our biosphere and contamination of non-target species. Although agriculture may deny that it can do without them, this is the rationale of the drug addict who demands increasing doses of his 'fix', lest he suffer the agonies of a withdrawal syndrome. ---In this analogy, we might classify the industrial producer as the 'pusher'. It is up to the biologist to rescue agriculture from this dilemma." I must confess that I am not sure that I want to be rescued by such a person whose mind can dispense the sort of "hate - propaganda" just quoted! Nevertheless, this example is illustrative of the interpretive function that all of us will be called upon to play in the future, and we in the Southern States may find ourselves called to the task sooner than others. (3) The Southern Weed Conference must also exist to provide a strong supportive role to WSA and thus, to all of Weed Science. It must help undergird and uphold WSA and Weed Science, not in a secondary and minor way but in a primary and most positive way! Might I even suggest that I may have gotten the cart before the horse in arguing my case, for I think it obvious that WSA draws much of its strength from the existence of strong regional conferences and not the reverse. If this be true, we should be seeking ways in which the regional conferences will become ever stronger and more firmly established to provide an even broader base for WSA and Weed Science.

The question: "Are the regional conferences and specifically SWC relevant to Weed Science?" My friends - we are Weed Science!

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<sup>4</sup>Collins, Stephen. Special Book Review "Pesticides and the Living Landscape" by Robert L. Rudd. Bioscience 14:37-38. 1964.

On behalf of the Sustaining Membership Committee for 1964, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the present sustaining membership and all those involved in preparation of the 1965 Conference, for their assistance and advice.

Respectfully submitted,

/S/ James L. Taylor, Chairman  
/S/ L. C. Brown  
/S/ P. D. Foster  
/S/ C. L. DeWald  
/S/ Carol Lollar

James Taylor moved that this report be accepted. It was seconded and carried.

STUDENT INTEREST COMMITTEE'S REPORT - Presented by H. Hanly Funderburk, Jr.

The Student Interest Committee met January 16, 1964, to formulate plans for the 1964 efforts. At that time it was decided that some kind of an educational campaign should be initiated. The first phase of this program was carried out by distributing 13,000 SWC and 13,000 WSA brochures to county agents and Vo-Ag teachers in thirteen southern states and to all members of SWC. The WSA brochures cost \$420.00 and the SWC brochures cost \$175.00. All mailing charges were taken care of by the states in which the brochures were distributed.

Since the essay contest was discontinued in 1964, it was decided that an award of \$50.00 would be presented to the graduate student who presented the best paper at the 1965 meeting.

The committee is hopeful that these programs will be continued.

Respectfully submitted,

/S/ H. H. Funderburk, Jr., Chairman  
/S/ G. C. Klingman  
/S/ R. D. Palmer  
/S/ W. K. Porter, Jr.

Hanly Funderburk moved that this report be accepted. It was seconded and carried.