

Chemists Learn New Uses for Swelling Clay; of Great Value to Agriculture

Research results from the nation's laboratories dealing with soil structures and the industrial uses of clay, the absorption behavior of chlorine, the surface tension of liquids and the chemical activity of blood and serum were reported to more than 400 chemists from all parts of the country participating in the fourteenth annual colloid symposium of the American Chemical Society at the University of Minnesota, writes a Minneapolis correspondent in the Chicago Daily News.

Bentonite clay, found principally in Wyoming, which possesses the ability of swelling in water, was put in the spotlight by Prof. Ernest A. Hauser and C. E. Reed of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They reported several new discoveries relating to the clay, which is becoming increasingly valuable in industry and agriculture. Bentonite was used recently to stop a serious leak in the cofferdam of the

Coulee dam of the Columbia river.

"Bentonite," said the report, "is finding ever-broadening application in the oil industry, where it is used during the drilling operation as a thickener. If suspensions of bentonite in water are allowed to rest they will become increasingly more viscous and finally form a 'gel' (a gelatin-like material). Upon mechanical agitation they are quickly liquified. This procedure can be repeated many times and is known as 'thixotropy.'

"A closer understanding of the reason for the different swelling capacities of bentonite and a better knowledge of the reasons for this peculiar phenomenon should materially assist in broadening out its industrial application. Furthermore, any more detailed knowledge should prove of great value in agriculture and soil preservation, since soil is made up to a large extent, of clay minerals."

Chemists Label Bentonite Of Great Value

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