

PREFACE

The quantity of information available on a subject so apparently restricted as ‘Supported Metal Catalysts’ is such that no single mind can fully comprehend it all. We must therefore welcome every effort that is made to reduce it to manageable proportions and to present it to us in a readily digestible form. The problems that I have encountered when faced with a similar task have been to discriminate between the important and the not so important, and then to order the former in as logical a fashion as possible. I cannot claim always to have succeeded, but at least I recognise some of the qualities that are needed, even if I do not possess them myself to the extent I would wish. Long experience in the field is one, and a fair helping of that valuable commodity ‘wisdom’, which was once defined as ‘knowing where to find knowledge’.

When I started research in 1948 there was obviously much less known about everything and about supported catalysts in particular. To quote a recent authority, there were things we didn’t know we didn’t know. Life was simpler then, and it has become progressively more complicated as tools have become available to extend our knowledge of the materials we use. But as J.W. von Goethe put it succinctly: *We know accurately only when we know little; with knowledge, doubt increases.* More optimistically, however, Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, believed that *If a man begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.*

The scientific method is a kind of perpetual motion machine in which our doubts and uncertainties stimulate us to continued effort to resolve them in the hope that we may come to at least a few certainties. For this we need the guidance of the wise who are prepared to invest their time and energy to create a book such as this. It deals with the preparation, characterisation

and use of supported metal catalyst in vitally important areas, as well as informing us of theoretical developments. An overview such as this will be of tremendous value to all who work or are thinking to work in this field.

So what is the criterion by which 'wisdom' should be judged? Many years ago I read the following advice, which in my view encapsulates a good deal of common sense.

He who knows not, and knows not he knows not, he is a fool: leave him.

He who knows not, and knows he knows not, he is willing: teach him.

He who knows, and knows not he knows, he is asleep: wake him.

He who knows, and knows he knows, he is wise: follow him.

If you wish to be better informed about supported metal catalysts, read the following chapters, written by people who know that they know.

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