
Editorial

Guest Editorial

Readers of this issue of the *WPSJ* may be divided into two categories – those who had the privilege to attend the XX1st World's Poultry Congress in Montreal and those who could not afford to or had other priorities. The vast majority of delegates attending the Congress will agree that the programme was well organised and presented in excellent facilities, which were within walking distance of some of the attractions of the charming city of Montreal. One aspect of Montreal that makes it especially appealing to its many visitors is the apparently peaceful mix of ethnic minorities and the appreciation of the cultural diversity.

It is inevitable that every visitor will have his own very special memories of the time spent in Montreal. One of the surprises for me was to discover a piece of the Berlin Wall behind the Intercontinental Hotel. Does this relic of a once divided city and a divided world carry a message for our poultry business? For me it does. I see the world still divided in many ways, with not only political barriers preventing true harmony. Whilst on the one hand there are perhaps close to two billion people who cannot afford to buy as much animal protein as is recommended for a balanced diet, on the other hand, in countries like the USA and Brazil, broiler leg meat is becoming a non-saleable by-product. For the first time the Congress Proceedings were offered on a CD. Is this modern vehicle of providing information another symptom of the dividing line across the world, *i.e.* between those who can read CDs and benefit from the information and those who still struggle to keep abreast with technical innovations?

Overflow of information is perhaps one of the greatest problems of our age. How much time do we spend sorting out useful from useless information, and how much time is left to generate information that is needed? Are scientists asking (and hopefully answering) pertinent questions, or are they spending too much time writing applications for research grants in a language that they try to ensure the reviewers will like? In the so-called developed countries there has been a rapid decline in the financial support for poultry research during the past two decades, and it has become virtually impossible to get backing for projects related to efficiency of production. It is often argued that research in this area should be left to the breeding companies, and that worldwide competition is a sufficient force to ensure continued progress.

If we agree that it would be in the best interest of mankind to make eggs and poultry meat available to more people, should we leave progress to achieving this goal to market forces or ask our research community to contribute more? If every person in the world with an interest in poultry had a personal computer and the CD with the Proceedings from the Congress in Montreal, would this help to reduce global malnutrition? Furthermore, if this were so, which paper would be the most helpful? Information is abundant, but we still have a lot of (mental) walls that need to be torn down before we will see a better balance between the needs of a growing human population, animal welfare and environmental concerns.

Dietmar K. Flock

[The concept of having guest editorials arose out of an impromptu conversation at the World's Congress in Montreal. It seemed entirely appropriate that one of its strongest supporters should be given first opportunity of airing his views! I hope and expect that others will follow the excellent lead taken by one of the Association's Vice-Presidents. Ed.]