



The Brazilian Chemical Society and the International Year of Chemistry

The International Year of Chemistry (IYC) was greatly celebrated in 2011 both in Brazil and around the world.¹

Chemists had a great opportunity to show their nations the variety of benefits brought by Chemistry, providing solutions so that men and women from all ages can have what is necessary for a life of quality: food, water, clothing, housing, medicines, transportation, entertainment, culture and safety.

In Brazil, the Brazilian Chemical Society – SBQ led such celebrations. The “Ciência Hoje” journal (*cienciahoje.uol.com.br*) published, during the whole year, articles on issues of broad interest and focused on chemistry. Those articles have been collected in a book to be published in 2012, supported by the Rio de Janeiro Research Support Foundation - FAPERJ. The São Paulo Research Support Foundation - FAPESP and the SBQ promoted a cycle of lectures, published in the FAPESP journal (*revistapesquisa.fapesp.br*), which reached great repercussion. A large number of independent initiatives, on the part of teachers, associations and students were registered by Brazilians on the IUPAC website.²

One of the most important IYC activities was the global experiment “pH of the Planet”, a pilot of which, held in 2010, had the support of a major chemical company. In 2011, the National Institutes of Science and Technology (INCT) for Functional Complex Materials (www.inomat.iqm.unicamp.br) and for Energy and Environment (www.inct.cienam.ufba.br) defined that it would be their main broadcast and scientific education activity in 2011. To do so, they counted on enthusiastic volunteer work as well as on the financial and logistic support of the Regional

Chemical Councils, of the Brazilian Chemical Industry Association – Abiquim, of Labor Unions and of Associations of companies of the sector. The two INCTs had 12 thousand kits built and distributed in the schools of their respective states, thanks to the logistic support of the Education Secretariat of the states and the Regional Chemical Councils - CRQs.³ To have the kits sent to other states, SBQ net was used. The INCT for Functional Complex Materials was also responsible for developing, together with the team of Química Nova Interativa – QNInt (qnint.sbq.org.br), the internet page in which the kit requests could be done and the experiment results are registered. Applications for mobile phones and tablets were developed and a large number of hits registered.

The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI) decided to include the “pH of the Planet”⁴ in the activities of the National Week of Science and Technology (SNCT), held in October, 2011. The highlight was the launching of the SNCT in Rio de Janeiro, on October 12th, 2011, with the presence of both the MCTI Executive Secretary and the 2008 Nobel Prize Chemistry Laureate, Martin Chalfie, who came to Brazil, invited by SBQ, by the INCT for Energy and Environment and by the INCT for Pharmaceuticals and Medicines (www.inct-inofar.ccs.ufrj.br) and who performed the experiment together with many children in Morro do Alemão.

For many children and teenagers from Brazilian schools, that was their first opportunity of performing a lab experiment. The results and testimonials that can be read on the web page are even touching. But, more important than the experiment itself, was the

awareness of the necessity for preserving this natural resource, essential for the life on the planet.

For having been a very celebrated year, during which millions of children and teenagers from all over the world got to know positive aspects of Chemistry, the IYC increased the responsibility of all those who make of Chemistry their profession.

The profane and the sacred, as well as good and evil, have always been together. The same happens with Chemistry: like Janus, the double-faced god, it shows two faces. It is up to chemists to conduct it to good and up to Chemistry teachers to show the ways through which it can lead to social development and

well-being – something only possible when we have a good and vigorous Chemistry.

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