

THIS PAST year has not been without its uncertainty regarding our honey marketing options. Although in the last annual address to conference my predecessor gave a forward look into the industry's future, I feel that following the recent decision of the authority's board on their proposed sale to a national co-operative, it is prudent to review the situation at this year's conference.

In an endeavour to bring into perspective, and to obtain the collective thoughts of as wide a range of opinion as possible, the executive called together a meeting of industry representatives holding points of view on all aspects of supplying, and selling of honey products. These included the H.M.A. Suppliers, Honey Packers', Comb Honey, and Honeydew Producers' Associations, as well as the full board of the authority and the executive.

To assist in launching this type of meeting, I asked for and received the assistance of the under secretary of agriculture, Mr Talbot, in taking the chair. This he was able to do for the first hour, before handing over to his representative, Mr Iain Forbes, of the ministry. Due to the progress made at this meeting a second was held in March of this year.

The aim was not to change industry policy, but rather to present to conference a firm basis on which to discuss future development. From the first meeting held on November 1 1979, the consensus of members noted the current attitudes in the industry as follows:

- That the H.M.A. review the situation at the end of the current year.
- That the administration of export control should be taken away from the authority.
- That it be noted that a South Island operation could in due course be the only commercial involvement for the H.M.A.
- That control over exports was still desired.
- That a new export administration system for controlling exports was needed so that commercial exporters and the H.M.A. were placed on a common footing.
- That the centre of export control should thus be removed from the H.M.A. by the minister and placed by him, in the hands of a competent

person who has other employment.

- That the new export control office should set export price minima – this to be done by appropriate and general background studies including those by the H.M.A.'s general manager.

Following this meeting, there developed among a group of South Canterbury beekeepers, the concept of a co-operative to absorb the functions of the authority, on a local level. However, on approaching the authority with the idea, it was arranged, and as I understand it, agreed to by both parties, to carry out a feasibility study of such a project on a national level.

**H.M.A. disbandment may mean a more exacting role for the association, possibly setting export controls for price and quality, making it live up to its motto:—**  
*"Better beekeeping . . . better marketing"*

The cost of this, I have been told, is to be borne by the authority in the meantime, although the board has hinted that the total costs of the study will finally come back to the hive levy payer.

As mentioned earlier, in March of this year, the second industry meeting was arranged, and held the day following an authority meeting. Those attending were advised by the authority's chairman that the following resolutions had been passed by the board at their meeting:

- That the authority agrees in principle to the concept of a honey marketing co-operative on a voluntary membership basis, and that the minister's opinion be sought as to the status of the authority's funds and assets if the authority were to be disbanded.
- That subject to the authority being satisfied as to the viability of the

proposed honey marketing co-operative, the authority agrees in principle to sell its operations at market valuation, and advance 80 per cent of its equity to the proposed honey co-operative at one per cent interest with the remainder advanced at Rural Bank export rate.

- That this meeting recommends that at the appropriate time the New Zealand Honey Marketing Authority be dissolved.

On the proposal to form a co-operative using authority's assets, there was a general consensus of opinion that there was merit in the idea, and the next step to take as already agreed by the board, was to continue with the feasibility study. This has now been completed and presented by the co-operative proposers to have levy payers throughout the country, as well as to the authority board on the 7th of this month.

Lengthy discussions as to the viability of such a proposed co-operative and as to whether or not it was the best form of industry organisation, were held at this meeting, before agreement was reached in giving the venture the go ahead. Faith in such a co-operative by New Zealand beekeepers will be measured by the number of shareholders it can attract.

Once formed it becomes in its own right a private commercial enterprise answerable only to the shareholders. As beekeepers, we must reconcile ourselves to the loss of an industry marketing organisation and the protection it has afforded us.

Personally, I would have preferred to have seen the re-organisation take a different form with the establishment of two or more co-operatives rather than the national concept. It may well be seen in the future that co-operation is not only cheaper, but more efficient than co-operatives.

For the supporters of such a scheme the initial costs will be high, and could be prolonged in coping with high overhead costs. From what information that is available I am afraid I cannot give it my support. So far it is difficult to ascertain who the interim directors of the proposed co-operative will be, nor have the aims and objectives of such an organisation been stated.

The impression so far gained is that they will be only changing the name over the door, and continuing on as

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the old H.M.A. has done with all its imperfections. However, such judgement may be wrong and I look forward to seeing the prospectus, which it is hoped will at least name those who are calling for the backing.

With the opening up of free trade, our next priority must now be consideration on what export controls in the categories of both price and quality the industry should follow, either on a voluntary or compulsory basis. Although this is still the prerogative of the authority, while it is still in existence, the time is coming when the association must accept the responsibility in this field of honey marketing.

After the authority has been disbanded, it will remain the sole, fully representative industry body to do the job. Perhaps then, and only then, can the association live up to its motto . . . better beekeeping, better marketing.

For the coming year the executive must consider the other courses of action demanding our attention, as can be seen from the remit paper. These include staffing of the apiary section of the Ministry of Agriculture, and apiary tenure on Crown land.

Other aspects not on paper are the educational side of apiculture, and the

interest being shown by beekeepers in both Marlborough and Poverty Bay in forming new branches of the association.

In presenting this address I will take the opportunity to report briefly on the Agricultural Chemical Board, of which I am the N.B.A.'s representative.

Much publicity has been given to the controversial question of 2,4,5-T and I can assure you that it has received its fair share of attention by all members of the board. Even as beekeepers, we came into our share of publicity on the contamination factor of honey, which as I understand it, has been taken no further than being voiced.

Agricultural chemicals are a complex subject, and current registrations of fully registered products now stand at 888, with another 138 on the provisional list.

Granted not all are insecticides or acaricides, which are of major concern to us, but even they have a total of 101 classified active ingredients. As an industry, we must remain vigilant on the subject of agricultural chemicals, especially as the demand for bees to pollinate tree and vine crops increase. No more so than in the field of kiwifruit pollination which requires a con-

tinuous close liaison between grower and beekeeper to overcome its many problems. Much can be done in understanding the other person's point of view and the problems he has to face.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have helped me during my term of office. These include Mr Talbot, the under secretary to the minister of agriculture, for his help in setting up the industry meetings, as well as his staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, especially Mr Iain Forbes and Mr Grahame Walton.

The chairman of the Honey Marketing Authority, Mr Percy Berry, and the members of his board, all of whom have been most approachable when required to discuss industry problems. The N.B.A. executive for its support, as well as Mr Graham Beard, executive secretary until early this year, and his replacement, Mr David Dobson.

The editor of the Journal, Mr Trevor Walton, for maintaining the high editorial standard of the New Zealand Beekeeper. Lastly, but by no means least, I thank my wife, Alison, who has put up with my many absences from home, and pre-occupations with industry matters.

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