



CONFERENCE '84

President's Report to the 1984 Annual Conference

A year ago you made me National President. It has been a satisfying and enjoyable year. I have met many interesting people and come to know many fine people better. However, it has been a lot of work, so I should like to thank those who have helped carry the load.

My wife, Pat, and everyone at Aratiki Honey who helped carry my share of family and business matters while I attended to NBA affairs; Stuart Goodman, our Executive Secretary, and the staff at the Pork Industry Board for their helpful and efficient service; our new Editor, Michael Burgess, and our new Advertising Manager, Elisabeth Burgess, both striving to improve our "New Zealand Beekeeper"; Trevor Walton, our retired Editor, and his team for their past service and for assisting with the smooth changeover of editorship; the five other members of the Executive for their help and cooperation and for enabling us to deal with our work in a calm, relaxed, and efficient manner; the many from the branches who helped over the year; and last but not least the MAF and other government people whom it has been my pleasure to deal with.



President Ian Berry NBA

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I cannot name them all but I must make special mention of Murray Reid and his apiary advisory officers. Without their help my job would have been much more difficult and time-consuming. To these people—and to many others who have helped—Thank You.

The motto of our Association is "Better Beekeeping—Better Marketing". For the second season in a row better beekeeping has been the main concern. The 1982-83 season saw the lowest-ever recorded production per hive in New Zealand. During 1983-84 it was very bad in many areas. Some members are facing financial problems with poor, sometimes complete failures of the honey crop two years in succession. Neither did the long, difficult spring of 1983, with its big bills for sugar to keep bees alive, help.

Chalk Brood was the big news of the year. It seems unlikely to be so important in the future; rather it will be another minor problem to live with. In fact, some of us may have been living with it for some time already.

On the brighter side, pollination fees are rapidly becoming a larger part of more beekeepers' incomes. It may not be long before most beekeepers in the North Island and the Nelson and Marlborough districts will be receiving at least some income from pollination fees.

While production was down, there has been sufficient honey carried over from previous years to meet the needs of the NZ market. Fortunate, because it is important that the domestic market be well supplied to reduce possible pressures to import honey.

Foreign honey could introduce serious exotic bee diseases. With keen competition it is also fortunate that we have not had to export much honey in the past two years. The comb honey export market has become difficult through the Middle East war and from increased competition by other exporting companies.

We must bear in mind that there is no point in producing a product unless it can be sold at a price that can at least cover costs. If the market becomes over-supplied there are five courses that can be undertaken:

(1) Store surplus honey until the market improves. Our two main products, honey and beeswax, are relatively non-perishable and can be stored for a long time at low cost. This simplifies the marketing of our products compared with almost all primary products except wool.

(2) Find alternative markets. That could include new uses for honey, such as dried honey.

(3) Cut costs to reduce, or at least hold honey prices, and so make it more competitive with other spreads. Cooperative bulk buying of packaging materials and the rapid reduction in internal transport costs are two examples of worthwhile cost reductions.

(4) Increase consumption of honey by increased promotion. However, we must bear in mind that promotion costs could increase retail prices and so reduce sales.

(5) Reduce production. The NZ honey crop can be adjusted by about 2,000 tonnes a year by feeding more or less sugar. When honey stocks are low more honey can be extracted and more sugar fed. When there is a surplus of honey less honey can be extracted and less sugar fed for winter and spring stores.

For many years marketing, better or otherwise, dominated our industry conferences. Then conferences took three days instead of the present two and were noted for their lively debates and a general lack of cooperation between the different sections of our industry.

Fortunately those days seem largely over and beekeepers are now working together and moving forward in a manner that suggests a bright future for our industry.

New developments in industry planning, beekeeping education, and "Trees for Bees" programmes are three examples of the result of greater beekeeping cooperation.

I have heard it said that the more cooperative attitudes are due to changing personnel within the industry. Frankly I doubt it. The industry has always had its share of rugged individualists, it still has, and probably always will.

I believe the reasons for changing attitudes within our industry have been the correction of several bad faults in the foundations on which our industry was built. These faults have now been corrected, and I feel we owe a great debt to those within the industry who saw these problems and after many years came up with the answers.

We are now placing more emphasis on forward planning, but I feel we should reflect briefly on past mistakes to ensure that history does not repeat itself. As I see it among the main problems that caused so much strife in our industry were:

(1) The Seals Levy. This system where one section of the industry was forced to pay a substantial levy to another section of the industry, without any apparent benefits to the payers. It was also complicated, expensive, and difficult to administer.

The present hive levy by comparison, where the levy is paid on hives by almost all commercial beekeepers at a fairly low rate, seems a much more practicable, reasonable, and readily acceptable way of providing industry finance.

(2) The blocking of the economic channels of export for our honey by restricting exports to one single channel. Not only did it keep export prices unnecessarily low, but the way it was administered did nothing to promote harmony within the industry.

(3) The demise of the Honey Marketing Authority and the formation of the NZ Honey Producers' Cooperative has solved the problem of suppliers of bulk honey not being able to organise and control their own affairs without the overview of the Board.

(4) The present NBA voting system, where votes are allocated on a scale of one to 12 per member, depending on the number of hives, and the fact that delegates can now carry those votes to conference and vote according to the wishes of branch members at remit meetings.

The old system, where two hobbyists at a branch remit meeting could outvote a commercial beekeeper, and that imbalance could be carried through to Conference, was most unsound.



CONFERENCE '84 PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Cont.)

One of the main achievements of the NBA during the past year was the planning meeting held at Flock House last May.

This meeting laid the foundations for a system of organised planning for the future of the industry. It should be one in which all members can contribute, should they wish.

During the meeting we set out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of and to beekeeping in NZ. It became evident that the industry has a lot going for it. Some of the more important strengths are:

(1) Beekeeping is important to the NZ economy. Without honey bees to pollinate we would have no kiwifruit, no apple and pear, no stone fruit industries; and white clover, on which so many of our pastoralists depend, could become an endangered species.

(2) New Zealanders eat a lot of honey, more per person than in almost any country in the world. And so they should. We provide a wide range of top quality honeys attractively packaged at reasonable prices. If Australians ate as much honey they would be importers, not exporters.

(3) We are now free of export controls for our products. We can now select the most profitable channels of export. We have, of course, weaknesses as well as strengths.

The planning meeting pinpointed 42. Among these were climate, low and variable profits, high cost of sugar for bee feed, and low level of securable assets for borrowing.

The planning meeting saw opportunities for reducing production costs: increased queen exports, "Trees for Bees", more hives for pollination, increased cooperation among beekeepers, to name a few.

Balancing these were threats such as decreases in pollen and nectar sources, protectionism in international trade, overstocking particularly in horticultural areas, and inadequate financing ability.

Leading on from our analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT for short) we developed a list of goals and objectives.

What are the prospects for the next year? Hopefully, a larger crop of honey. With two poor seasons in a row some packers are already running short, and stocks should be built up.

With the low carry-over of honey expected at New Year 1985, a third poor season could bring honey shortages to NZ late in 1985. With the rapidly increasing number of hives needed for pollination we have now overstocked in some of our honey producing areas. This could lead to bigger fluctuations in the honey crop. In average or below average seasons the overstocked areas will produce less than if not overstocked.

On the other hand, in high production years, when hives produce well, no matter how many there are in the area, we could see some very big crops.

During the next year we hope to see our planning scheme firmly established, and we also hope to take a big step forward with education with the introduction of our National Certificate in Beekeeping.

Mr Nick Wallingford and Mr Keven Hearle, both from the Bay of Plenty Community College, and Mr Lawson Robinson from the Education Dept, have put in a lot of good work to bring this project to completion.

It seems likely that by 1 December 1984 Telford Farm Training Institute will have a certificate, approved by the NBA, for students who complete the beekeeping course under Mr Paul Marshall.

"Trees for Bees" and honey promotion should make significant progress, and we may hope to see an apiary advisory officer stationed at Whangarei before long, filling a long felt need in Northland.

We hope to encourage members and others to take a much more active interest in our journal "The NZ Beekeeper", so making it not just one of the best beekeeping journals in the world but The Best. If we can do this we should be able to increase our circulation and this could mean even more improvements.

Our journal has a big part to play in the most important role of the NBA, that is, to provide the means by which all involved in the industry can communicate freely. Good communications should help us to work together for both the good of the industry and of New Zealand.

The change of government has brought a 20 percent devaluation. This devaluation, while pushing up some costs, should help us to market our products in several ways. So I conclude by predicting that 1985 will not bring marketing problems to our main products, and that we shall need to place the emphasis on "Better Beekeeping" rather than "Better Marketing" for at least one more year.

Ian Berry



Deaf beekeeper Grant Brewster, New Plymouth, at Conference '84 with his interpreter, Clare Vale.

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Well-known aero-naval historian and researcher, R. D. (Dick) Layman of San Francisco, tells me that the first report of the Wright Brothers' historic flight was in a beekeeping journal. Dick, who fills the city editor's chair for the San Francisco Chronicle, also says that the ANZUS debate has given New Zealand bold headlines in U.S. newspapers for the first time in his long journalistic career.