

The President's Report

The first Annual Conference of the NZ Beekeepers' Assn was held in Auckland on 20 March 1885, over 101 years ago. Since then our industry has seen many changes, but I doubt there has ever been such a rapid growth in the number of beehives as during the past few years. To me this indicates that the industry is in good heart and that the policies adopted by your National Association during recent years have been sound.

The Honey Crop. Although some members had a poor honey crop and the season did not live up to its early promise, honey production this season was the second highest on record. That means that over the past two seasons we have produced the two biggest crops of honey on record in New Zealand. That is partly due to the fact that New Zealand now has more beehives than ever.

Honey Marketing. In spite of record production, the high value of the Kiwi dollar and generally low prices for other agricultural exports, honey prices have not only been maintained but considerably improved. An increase of about 20% in the in-tank value of clover honey paid by exporters this year has helped lift honey prices on the local market. With the keen competition developed between exporters for the limited quantities of honey available, care will be needed to ensure the

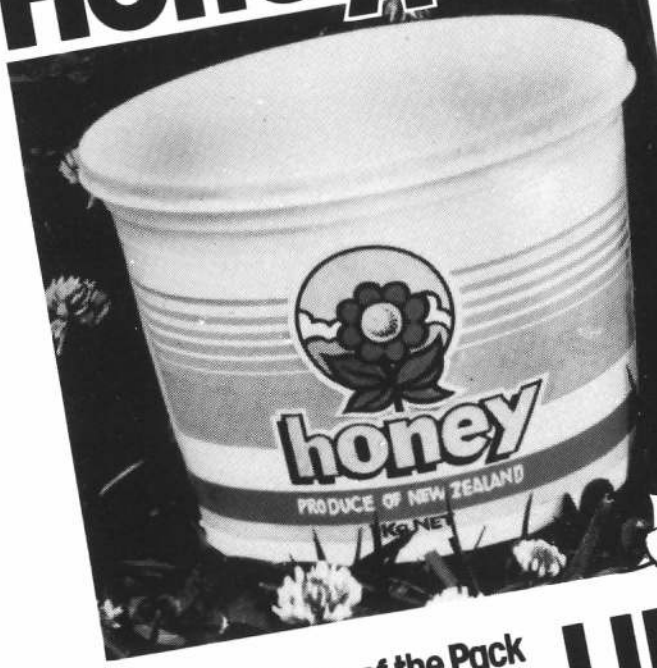
New Zealand market is not left short. This could increase pressure for importing honey, with the certainty of bringing in EFB. Recent reports seem to indicate the present stocks of honey in New Zealand are about right to see us through to the new season.

Orchard Pollination. The number of hives hired out to orchardists for pollination of kiwifruit, apples, and stonefruit was an all-time record last season. It seems likely that more hives will be needed for pollination this spring in spite of the widespread advertising of the MAF Research Division's claim that bees are now redundant for orchard pollination. We are so used to hearing claims that bees are about to be replaced by spray pollination, bumble bees, etc, that we have now become rather cynical about each new claim. However, we should remember, that in the unlikely event of the establishment of some more effective and economical means of pollination than honeybees, it would certainly have a devastating effect on those beekeepers who have built up hive numbers primarily to meet the needs of the kiwifruit growers. It pays to spread your risks and not depend too heavily upon any one source of income from your bees.

Funding of Disease Inspection. One of the main subjects discussed at Conference. Under the Government's "user

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The President's Report (conc.)

pays" policy we could lose our present system of apiary registration and disease inspection unless we pay for it. That raises several questions. The first, do we need a register of beekeepers and apiary sites? The answer must be yes if we want to maintain our present system of AFB inspection and if we are to have any chance of eradicating an outbreak of exotic disease. The second question is, do we want to keep our disease inspection at the present level or should we raise or lower it? There are about 1% of NZ hives destroyed each year because of AFB; that is about 3,000 hives which at \$100 per hive represents an expense of about \$300,000 each year. If we could cut this by half it would save about \$150,000. However, if the disease level rose to 2% it would cost us an additional \$300,000 a year. I understand the level in Western Australia has recently risen to about 10%. I believe most beekeepers feel we should at least maintain the present standard of disease inspection and, if it can be done without excessive cost, improve on the present situation. If we must ask ourselves how much money do we need, when, and where should it come from?

Industry Trust Funds. The accounts for the Trust Funds at 31 December 1985 show a balance of \$875,000 and a tax paid income for the year of \$63,000. The largest allocation from the Trust Funds so far has been our commitment to fund the appointment of Bee Pathologist, Dr Denis Anderson, with DSIR, Mt Albert, for \$37,500 over three years. Half of this amount has now been paid.

The Industry Plan. As a result of a meeting at Flock House in May between the NBA Executive, Murray Reid and two of

his team, and Nick Wallingford complete with computer, all hive-levy payers will now have received a copy of our 1986-87 industry plan. The 1984-85 plan proved a useful tool in running our industry and the experience gained was a big help in putting together this new plan. A lot of work has gone into these two plans, but we now have industry planning on a continuing basis.

Branch Meeting Times. At least one of our larger branches has a problem with a division between those members who can attend branch meetings during the day and those who can only attend meetings at night. In this case splitting into two branches will probably be the solution but this same problem affects all branches. Daytime meetings held during working hours mean most hobbyists and part-time members are unable to attend, while night meetings mean some commercial members are reluctant to attend because of having to travel long distances late at night. There is no simple answer but branches should keep this problem in mind when setting meetings.

The Future. While the outlook for beekeeping in New Zealand must be considered bright, there are several reasons why it would seem likely that the recent high rate of growth will, at least, slow down. Export values may decline if bigger crops are harvested in the Northern Hemisphere. The threat of the DSIR's biological control programme to several of our main nectar and pollen sources, especially nodding thistle and gorse, is of grave concern to many beekeepers. The risk of EFB being brought in from Australia or other countries, in a pot of honey smuggled past agricultural quarantine, is a constant threat and one to which your Association has given a lot of attention and, I suppose, we must concede there is a chance that MAF Research might find a way to make a few of our bees redundant. We have, however, much going for us. The fact that our industry has not been built on artificial supports such as SMP's or cheap government money, means we have not had those props knocked from under us. Also the fact that our exporting was deregulated about four years ago and an increasing number of exporters are opening up new markets overseas for New Zealand honey is to our advantage. The number of hives used for pollination is almost certain to increase dramatically in the next few years and the new developments in exporting of package bees, as well as queen bees, point towards a sound future for our industry. Beekeeping in New Zealand has never been a quick or easy road to big money, it probably never will be, but I suggest there will be a good living to be made by those who are prepared to put the necessary thought and effort into their beekeeping businesses for well into the future.

In conclusion I would like to thank all those who have made my three years as President such an interesting, satisfying and enjoyable experience. Also special thanks to my wife Pat, Stuart Goodman and Olive Hebron, the five members of the Executive, Murray Reid and his team, and Michael and Elisabeth Burgess. While I will not be accepting nomination for President this year I look forward to serving at least one more year on your Executive.

IAN BERRY



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