

President's report

I am privileged to have the opportunity to present a third Annual Report to Conference as President of the Association.

In preparing a report such as this, it is always difficult to decide just how much of the past year's activity to try and review, or which items to highlight. Undoubtedly this year has presented considerable hardship for many beekeepers who have been subjected to harsh treatment from the elements, and Executive are very aware of the depressed situation in some areas.

Low production figures, coupled with continuing high financial charges despite lowering inflation and little possibility of assistance from Government, have left many individual beekeepers wondering how they will survive through to the next season. Sadly I fear some may not, and current offers of beehives for sale at below average prices somewhat exemplifies this situation.

THE HONEY CROP and PRICES: The 1988-89 honey season will go down on record as one of the lowest for

some years. The estimated total production is between 5,500 and 6,000 tonnes, an average of around 17-18kg/hive, with considerable variations both between and within districts. Despite some carry-over of honey from last year, it is highly probable that total honey stocks in the country will be at low levels by the end of 1989.

While pleasing to note, the current bulk honey prices of around \$1.80-\$2.20 per kg. represent not much more than a catch up from the disastrous prices of 1988. Packed honey prices have also moved upwards in line with bulk prices, and it is imperative that these are sustained when we again reach normal levels of production.

HONEY MARKETING: On the local market, recent estimates indicate that total retail sales of honey have fallen around 12% in the past year — a situation which refutes the policy adopted by some major packers last year of reducing prices to gain market share. In the final analysis, I believe the whole industry has suffered the consequences of cheapening a quality product to the

point of creating consumer resistance. We must now take the present opportunity to restore this lost ground through better understanding between producers, packers and buyers, with the aim of substantially increasing the market share for honey.

Despite unfavourable export market conditions during 1988, a total of 2046 tonnes of honey in various forms were exported with an average FOB value of \$3.52 per kg. For the five months up to June 1 this year, exports have reached 527 tonnes, at an average FOB value of \$3.31 per kg. This reinforces the comment I made in last year's report that the export market is now providing a significant annual return to our industry, and was worthy of support and encouragement.

If we accept that under normal circumstances our present hive numbers mean we have the potential to produce an annual excess of honey above domestic market requirements, then we must be prepared to encourage and support those export markets where profitable returns can be obtained.

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MARKET RESEARCH and PROMOTION: The NBA Marketing Committee has met on several occasions during the year to continue the development of a marketing strategy for New Zealand honey, as outlined in our Industry Plan. Efforts to date have been mainly directed towards the domestic market, and has proved to be a frustrating exercise in many respects. Attempts to obtain data on honey stocks and prices have met with little success, due it seems to the reluctance of a number of potential contributors to supply even the most basic information.

In view of this prevailing attitude, I believe this Association should now concentrate its limited marketing resources on the encouragement and development of honey and live-bee exports. There are number of factors to indicate even better opportunities ahead in this field, and it is pleasing to see the formation of groups of beekeepers with a commitment to produce quality products for specific export markets around the world.

If the NBA is to accept an active role in marketing, then a clear indication must come from the wider industry, along with a commitment of support, both financially and in spirit. Experience would indicate that this is unlikely to be readily achieved in the local situation, but that the sheer magnitude of the export market demands a concerted effort, and dare I suggest the possibility of a central export co-ordinating organisation?

BEEKEEPING RESEARCH: An important decision was made at the Annual Industry Planning meeting in March to pursue the objective of establishing a Beekeeping Research and Advisory committee for the industry. When established this committee will aim to provide advice to Executive in assessing research proposals which have been submitted for financial support; will aim to initiate research according to industry needs; and will assist with the securing of adequate funding from all sources for beekeeping research in New Zealand.

It is critical that we maintain an effective research capability in beekeeping for the future. In order that we may respond to threatening situations as they arise, and further develop our beekeeping skills and methods. The Ruakura Research Unit, Invermay Apicultural Research Unit, and our continued association with the DSIR, are the three main links in our present

research capability. It is pleasing to report that these links will soon be extended to Australia with Industry Trust funds having been allocated to maintain contact with Dr Denis Anderson when he returns to work for CSIRO in Canberra.

INDUSTRY COMMUNICATIONS: A significant development this year was the introduction of the NBA newsletter, "Buzzwords". This monthly publication is now providing topical information for members, with the aim of improving overall communication within the industry. I believe this is being achieved, and that "Buzzwords" will become a more important medium for providing information in the future. Appreciation is extended to Andrew Matheson MAF, Tauranga, as compiler along with Nick Wallingford for production.

INDUSTRY TRUST FUNDS: The total allocation of funds from the Industry Trusts for the past year was \$50,400. The provision of this funding support for educational, research, and promotional work has again been a key factor in the continuing progress of the industry. Our thanks to the Trustees for their administration of these Funds on behalf of the Association.

INDUSTRY PLANNING: The annual industry planning meeting this year included representatives from most of the specialised groups within the beekeeping sphere as well as the Executive. Progress over the past five years was reviewed, and goals established for the association to work towards into the next decade. The contribution from those who attended was greatly appreciated, with many constructive ideas discussed in the formation of this year's Industry Planning statement.

NBA ADMINISTRATION: One of the objectives arising from our planning meeting was for the establishment of a management support officer for the NBA Executive. This is to be further discussed at this Conference, and the Executive are seeking the guidance of the industry in this decision. I have clearly stated my personal opinion that this association cannot function fully, or develop much further without more professional assistance in its administration.

The present heavy reliance upon voluntary input by Executive members is no longer fully effective in coping with the need for the NBA to respond to an increasingly diverse range of issues. If the concepts of employing added administration support is not acceptable or cannot be adequately funded, then this Association must quickly decide what functions it will perform in the future under the constraints of

available funds and time for Executive members and others who may be willing to lend a hand.

SUMMARY: As an industry we have some major problems to grapple with. Uncertainty continues over the ability to maintain disease control programmes in the face of user-pays demands and inherent difficulties in drafting suitable legislation to provide the necessary funding. We find ourselves unwittingly caught up in the struggle to control TB in pastoral farming, whereby 'possum eradication programmes are posing a threat to our beehives and livelihoods. And as always, there is the ever-present problem of providing adequate funds and servicing for our Association particularly as the demand for the industry to become more self-reliant is increasing steadily.

It is difficult to remain optimistic in the short term under such circumstances and the temptation to lie down and let it all roll over us is great. However, I believe there are signs for cautious optimism, with improvements in both the domestic and overseas situations. Our ability to take advantage of any such improvement will depend upon a positive approach from beekeepers, and a continued policy by the industry of forward planning and preparation. We should learn from past mistakes, but we cannot afford the luxury of dwelling in the past. Our direction is forward whether we like it or not, and our aim must be to control that direction wherever and however we can.

APPRECIATIONS: Finally, may I again extend my personal thanks to the many people who have assisted in the work of the association over the year. In particular to Stuart Goodman, Olive Hebron and the staff at Head Office in Wellington, to the other five Executive members for their support; to Murray Reid and his NABU advisory team; to Michael Burgess as "Beekeeper" editor, and to John Heineman as National Librarian. My appreciation also to the many individual beekeepers who have provided help throughout the past year.

Allen McCaw

HONEY FUDGE

2 cups sugar
 1 square unsweetened chocolate
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 1 cup evaporated milk
 ¼ cup honey
 2 tablespoons butter
 1 cup nuts
 • Boil sugar, chocolate, salt, and milk for five minutes. Add honey and cook to soft-ball stage (240° F.). Add butter; let stand until lukewarm; beat until creamy, add nuts, and pour into buttered pan. Cut when firm.