

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Upon taking up the position of President of this association in 1986, I had not anticipated remaining for a four-year term. Nor had I ever imagined the possibility of delivering my final address to an annual conference convened on a tropical island. It is most encouraging to note the large attendance and number of new faces present this year, and I trust this may be a sign of a developing interest in the affairs of the NBA, as much as in the added attractions of the conference venue here in Rarotonga.

Looking back over a total of seven years as an Executive member, I believe the development and achievements of our Association in that time have been quite significant. There is of course, much remaining to be done, which I also believe can be achieved with continued effort and application from us all.

Over the latter half of last decade our country has undergone a period of dramatic economic and social readjustment, and our industry has certainly not been immune from the effects of these. Even without the usual fickle behaviour of our climate, the economic changes alone would have provided a formidable hurdle for most of us to overcome.

No less difficult has been the task facing the NBA Executive during this time. For the last five or six years we have concentrated upon setting up the necessary systems and structures for the development of our association as the principal administrative body for the beekeeping industry in the future.

We have strengthened our capability in education, in research, in marketing and promotion, in public relations and communication, and in improved NBA administration. And the saga of funding disease surveillance and advisory services has continued on. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly discuss some of these developments, and speculate a little on what the future may hold.

NBA ADMINISTRATION.

Our association's administration has been further enhanced through the interim appointment for one year of an NBA Executive Officer. Mr Ted Roberts was appointed to this position, and has provided valuable input through the preparation of reports for Executive, and assessment of numerous legislation changes currently being made. It is intended to make a permanent ap-

pointment at the beginning of 1991, following our assessment of the first year's activity.

A further extended planning meeting was held at Flock House in March, and the 1990 Industry Plan has been circulated to members. This provides a blueprint of the main intentions for executive activity during the coming year. Our monthly NBA newsletter "Buzzwords" has been valuable in providing up-to-date information on progress towards achieving the objectives set.

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE, FUNDING AND MAF SERVICES.

Following the complete restructuring of many of the Government services and systems we have previously depended upon, and often taken for granted in the past, we have been faced with a number of very difficult decisions. It is now for us to decide exactly which Government services our industry needs, and which of them we are willing to pay for.

Seeking answers to these questions has occupied a considerable amount of Executive's time, and has certainly not assisted progress in other important activities of our association. Because disease surveillance, border control, and the apiary register are fundamental to our livelihood, I believe this is one question we cannot ignore, and must continue to seek a solution for.

Nothing I have seen during my term on Executive has presented a long-term, viable alternative to maintaining a disease surveillance and control programme, utilising existing MAF expertise and systems. The fact that we have not yet achieved a solution is a direct indication of the complexity of the issues involved.

There are no simple answers, and we must proceed with caution and careful planning in every step. We must also continue to maintain whatever pressure we can to ensure we receive adequate consideration in the drafting of necessary legislation, such as the Commodity Levies Bill.

The opportunity exists now for us to strengthen the valuable working relationship that exists between our industry and MAF advisory services. MAF provides us with a number of regulatory, diagnostic, research and advisory services. By contracting directly for the provision of some of these services, we gain the advantages of the rest and retain the expertise and knowledge of a number of beekeeping specialists.

HONEY PRODUCTION, PRICES AND MARKETING.

Honey production for the 1989-90 season has been estimated at around 8,500 tonnes — a considerable improvement over the previous year of around 6,000 tonnes. Stocks of honey proved adequate during 1989, and the current production rate confirms my past assertion that the success of our exporting effort is a major factor in maintaining overall honey price stability.

For the year ended December 1989, our recorded exports of honey totalled 1,040 tonnes, to an FOB value of \$3,684,000. This equates to an overall average price for all honey types of \$3.54 per kg. So far for the first five months of 1990, we have exported a total of 460 tonnes, at an average of \$4.04 per kg. which means we are on target to achieve a similar level of exports to last year, at an increased average value.

Noteworthy again is the export performance of specialty products, and the ongoing development of organic honey markets. It is encouraging to see that more beekeepers are accepting that their responsibility for selling their product does not cease as soon as they screw the bung on their honey drums.

Recent reports from exporters are indicating slow sales and low prices being offered for bulk clover-type honey at present. This situation is contrary to market expectations, as world honey stocks are believed to be at low levels, production in some major countries has been markedly reduced, and consumption in some importing countries has risen significantly.

Why then are we not seeing a significant increase in world honey prices and demand? One suggestion is that by means of continuing their honey price support scheme, and providing export promotion incentives, the United States is effectively holding down the world market price of honey thereby setting a value which guarantees cheap supplies of honey for their own markets, to the detriment of exporting countries.

The NBA Marketing Committee, in co-operation with Mr Percy Berry, have taken up this issue and approaches have been made to Government trade officials both here and in the US to address the inequities of these policies. We have also continued contact with the International Honey Exporters' Association which is working to maintain liaison between a number of honey exporting countries around the world.

It is to be hoped that as the year proceeds, export sales of bulk honey will be more favourable to avoid the detrimental effects of excess production being forced on to local markets at low prices. In recognising this possibility, I fully support the proposal before this Conference from the Honey Packers' Association for the formation of a Honey Exporters' Organisation in New Zealand.

On the local market, prices have been steady over recent months, with an increase in the NZ Retail Price index for honey of almost 5% since January this year. Concern has been expressed from the Marketing Committee that the overall consumption of honey in New Zealand may have declined against other spreads in recent years. The committee are presently investigating this aspect by seeking statistical data from a major marketing organisation, although this is being hampered somewhat by a lack of available funding.

It is very obvious that honey is under siege in the spread market, with considerable television advertising being dedicated to promoting alternatives such as jams, marmite, and peanut butter. Many of these are advocating the natural, healthy aspects of their

products — attributes which we know are inherent in honey, but many consumers still need to be made aware of.

There are a number of manufacturers using honey as a positive selling point for their products. These include breads, biscuits, breakfast cereal, meat glazes, muesli bars, cosmetics, soap, hair shampoo, fruit drinks and chocolate bars. Why not also promote honey in its own right for these same virtues and receive the credit and increased value our natural products deserve?

Effective promotion costs money and requires a financial commitment from the industry for which I see very little support at present. We remain individualistic in our approach to domestic marketing, and mistrusting of any attempts to promote a co-ordinated marketing effort. Meanwhile, our position in the retail market may be slipping away from under our noses.

We cannot afford the luxury of complacency in the de-regulated environment which now exists in New Zealand. With CER a reality, perhaps it will take an importation of Australian honey on to our market to force us into positive action. Perhaps we may then be willing to make a commitment to a solid marketing strategy for our products. Perhaps by then it may also be too late.

RESEARCH

The beekeeping industry must also decide the extent to which it will financially support its research programs. Research funding in organisations such as ours is not always considered essential, particularly if times are tough, when there is a strong temptation to reject research as irrelevant, or too expensive.

But serious thought is rarely given to the effects of funding cuts, or the future long-term need for research information and research capability. Research is a worthwhile investment which can assist us to improve the efficiency and performance of our beekeeping, and to cope with changes in our environment.

The NBA is the best vehicle to fund and co-ordinate research on behalf of the industry. The Executive has accepted this responsibility by establishing an Apicultural Research and Advisory Committee, including members from a number of organisations with which we presently have links.

This committee is charged with providing advice to the Executive on appropriate research programmes for funding, initiating research amongst beekeepers and researchers according to industry needs, and assisting in

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securing additional sources of funding for industry research.

In particular, there is a great need for funding for marketing research. Executive has submitted a remit to Conference which proposes an additional levy specifically for research purposes. The response from members to this remit will be seen as a measure of the commitment you wish to make to research in all of its possible forms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I leave the NBA presidency with mixed feelings, ranging from personal satisfaction in some achievements, to a degree of disappointment in goals strived for, but not yet attained. But I firmly retain my belief in the value of our national association, and the importance of the functions we perform on behalf of the beekeeping industry.

Contrary to some opinions, the NBA cannot take responsibility for every individual beekeepers' financial viability or profitability. We can however continue to strive for the best possible environment for this industry to function in, but this will not be achieved without the full support of us all.

LIBRARY REPORTS TO CONFERENCE

The library has continued to serve its purpose, by providing material to NBA members, branches, beekeeping clubs, some non-members, and schools.

Financially we have held our own thanks to some interest received from the small investment account, voluntary labour, and by keeping overheads to the very minimum.

The books lost in the Levin house fire have at last been replaced through the good services of Apimondia. The one irreplaceable item has been photocopied from a book we have been so lucky to borrow from a Southland beekeeper. The cost of replacing these items was adequately covered by the insurance pay-out (\$200.00).

We have purchased "Beekeeping in the year 2000", the Australian Congress 1988 Proceedings This involved \$76.00.

On order are the additions to Graham Kleinschmidt's Research Papers of which the library holds the original collection.

Many thanks to our Editor, Messrs Reg Clarke, Malcolm Scrivener and Andrew Matheson for books, papers, and a video passed on or donated to the library.

John Heineman

As that old saying goes: "Ask not what your Association can do for you — rather ask what you can do for your Association."

In looking ahead I see a lot of hard work still to be done, and I also see opportunities waiting to be taken up. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm of many beekeepers in supporting the NBA, and have every faith that this will carry the organisation forward to a positive, bright future through this decade and into the next century.

It is very difficult to personally acknowledge all of the people who have assisted and supported me over the past four years. My sincere appreciation must go to all the other Executive members, past and present; to Stuart Goodman and Olive Hebron from Wellington headquarters; Michael and

Elisabeth Burgess; and Murray Reid and his team of MAF advisors, past and present.

Thanks also to the many individuals who have volunteered to serve in a variety of capacities for our organisation, including NBA branch officers, the Industry Trustees, NBA Librarian, and members of various committees. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the support and tolerance of my wife Marie, my family and business associates, who have indirectly carried a good deal of the responsibility and commitment that goes with the position of NBA President.

I look forward to serving at least one more year on your Executive, and the opportunity to meet many of you again informally at future NBA Conferences.

Allen McCaw

BOOK REVIEW

By John Heineman

Mr Burgess, our editor, just passed on a real treasure to the library: "THE HUMBLE BEE, its life-history and how to domesticate it", by F W L Sladen, 1989-237 p.-UK. The Humble Bee=The Bumble Bee.

Mr Sladen was a well-known English naturalist. He wrote, printed, and published his first little book by this title at the age of 16 years. It drew a lot of interest. This was in 1892. This was later followed by a text under the same title but covering a far wider field of observation and research. He became a professional beekeeper and manufacturer of equipment, was a commercial queen breeder and went to Canada where he was employed as "Dominion Apiarist". He died at the early age of 45 when taking a dip in Lake Ontario after a day's work at one of the research apiaries and mating stations situated on one of the islands. Today he is regarded as the Father of Bumble Bee Research.

He must have been endowed with a great ability for observation for he found out how bees gather pollen, pack it into the pollen basket, and transport it home. He also put forward the theory of the bees chemical senses (nasanov gland, pheromones) which later research has proved to be correct.

There is a New Zealand connection with Mr Sladen as he sent fertilised bumble bee queens to our country for pollination of red clover.

This book is a reprint of the 1912 publication and also includes a copy of

the text he wrote as a boy. It contains the story of his trials and errors, attempts in establishing nesting sites and domestication, anatomy and identification of the different species. It is a classic but very easy to read and today still a "must" for students of the bumble bee. Colour plates, photos and drawings are first class. Well bound hard back with a very attractive dust jacket. Foreword by Professor J B Free.

The publishers have on purpose chosen a good quality recycled paper for as they say the modern farming practices involving the removal of trees, hedges etc. have done a lot of harm to the environment suited for bumblebee nesting. The use of this paper is their small gesture towards better use of our resources.

It is a fine addition for our library collection and it is thoroughly recommended reading for anyone, beekeeper, nature lover, high school student or a would be bumblebee specialist. For anyone who wants to buy it:

LOGASTON PRESS, Little Logaston Wootton Almeley, Herefordshire HR3 6QH, UK. Price Sterling 14.95 + 3.15 postage which translates to approx. NZ\$55.00.

