

BEEKEEPING

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WEST COAST ASSN.

Field Day at Gladstone

SPEECHES AND DEMONSTRATIONS.

The West Coast Beekeepers's Association held their annual field day at Mr W. Butler's apiary at Gladstone on Saturday afternoon, the weather being excellent for the occasion, and there being a good attendance of beekeepers, who were provided with interesting addresses and demonstrations in the apiary.

Mr G. Smithers (Chairman of the West Coast Association) extended a welcome to those present, stating that it was some years since a field day had been held, and he was pleased to see such a large gathering. He then called upon Mr J. O'Brien, M.P., to open the field day.

Mr O'Brien thanked the Association for the privilege of being present by invitation. He was sorry to say that he had not had a lot to do with bees, having been taught a lesson by them when he was a boy. Mr O'Brien said that statistics showed that bees were first brought to New Zealand by Wakefield in 1839, but there was nothing much done in the development of the industry until 1906. In 1904, the total amount of honey exported was ten tons, whereas last year 2,365,000 pounds at a value of £82,743 was exported, which was a big increase, and proved the real value of the New Zealand honey at Home. Although they had a climate on the West Coast unsuitable to honey production, good progress was being made, and he congratulated the people in keeping on in an effort to make the industry. Whatever the producers did, they must keep the standard high. A lesson could be taken from farmers, who went in for standardised cheese for export. Instead of allowing a standard to be lowered, it should be raised, as it was impossible to get away with a low

be studied more keenly in the future with the object of cutting out the middle man. He hoped to see the beekeepers go along the right lines and maintain a good standard in their product. He then declared the field day open.

Mr E. A. Earp, Senior Apiary Instructor, of the Agricultural Department, said he was pleased to be present at the field day. He urged the beekeepers on the West Coast to stand by their Association and their National Association that was doing much for New Zealand. He stated that the problem was greater to-day in consequence of the competition that was being met in overseas trading. The present season was somewhat late throughout the whole of New Zealand, and it was difficult to estimate the ultimate crop that would accrue, but the indications were for but half the normal crop. The weather was the setback, as it had been unsuitable during the past month. It was unfortunate that the crops would not be large as the beekeepers wanted to swell their exports overseas. Last season beekeepers were inclined to become panicky and quit at local prices, which was a big mistake, as if they stuck together and supported their Association, it would be beneficial to them. The Agricultural Department was doing what it possibly could during the economic depression, and that was to disseminate amongst beekeepers. It was also unfortunate that the Department had to curtail expenses. With seven officers in different centres, the Department had had 43 part-time men working, mostly against disease, where it was formerly very rampant, and owing to the shortage of money the most of these men were dismissed. They hoped to do better in this direction next year, but it depended on how much money would be available. Referring to grading, Mr Earp said beekeepers should pay every attention to export honey. It should be remembered that an important factor was packing, and that one could by extracting rightly put the honey out in fine condition and free from scum. On the West Coast, owing to the climatic conditions the honey came in badly

It was after-treatment that was essential. Beekeepers should endeavour to get a smooth-grained honey, by the introduction of what was called a starter, which would give honey the smooth grain that is in demand. Buyers did not want coarse honey. Rata honey was smooth in grain, and even if it was not so tasteful, its smooth grain would take on. The Apiary Act passed by Parliament was working smoothly. It provided that in the removal of bees, beekeepers must obtain a permit from Inspector, and one could see a great advantage in the stopping of the indiscriminate removal of bees. This had helped considerably to keep districts clear of foul brood and other diseases. There were 8,000 beekeepers in the Dominion to-day, and their number was increasing rapidly, and the protection against foul brood was a great factor. If they had thousands of colonies to demonstrate with, instead of 104 colonies, it would be better. The object of a demonstration was to do something of a practical nature in the apiary.

Mr J. Rentoul, Chairman of the Honey Control Board, and Managing Director of the New Zealand Co-operative Honey Producers' Association, in his address, stressed the necessity of keeping the standard of the product up. He had just returned from abroad, and had gained a good insight into the ex-

ports in the United Kingdom, to which he would make reference at the meeting last night. Concerning honey, beekeepers required to realise that their packing should be a specialty. Honey was bought in the Old Country by people who were fairly discriminating in their foods. In the Old Country, Australian fruit was more favoured than Californian fruit, as in the latter the packing was not just right, and the flavour as a result was not as good. That referred also to honey, and as far as the market was concerned, they had their honey in a premier position, and did not want to go back in any way. He did not want the impression to go around that the West Coast was the only place where packing was poor in New Zealand. Some beekeepers had rusty tins and had cleaned them with kerosene, which was a fairly insinuating mixture, as people did not like it. It spoiled honey and should not be in packing houses at all. Their's was an industry that had to be watched carefully and given every encouragement.

Mr S. T. Page, Apiary Instructor for the West Coast, then gave a practical demonstration of the opening up of a hive, and other matters in connection with beekeeping which was very interesting indeed. During this process, only one person was actually known to have received a sting, but one or two others were also stung, though they concealed their discomfort, and did not let it be known.

After a dainty afternoon tea, provided by the host and hostess, Mr and Mrs W. Butler, had been partaken of, Mr Rentoul gave an interesting address on the fads of beekeeping. He said that the necessity for producing honey cheaply had brought it down to short cuts and if hard times were to continue they would have to further cut out unnecessary work. Fads such as ventilating and other fancy ideas were wrong, except in an experimental way. A small entrance of three-eighths of an inch was ample, as bees ventilated the hives themselves, and their task was made easier by having a small entrance. While the use of excludis was laid down in text books it became a

fad if carried to extremes. Reductions in swarming could be carried into effect by various methods and was being successfully carried out by New Zealand beekeepers. He only knew one beekeeper in New Zealand who branded queen bees by putting a little vermilion on their backs so that he could pick them out on the frames. This particular beekeeper did not go in for honey production, but he was interesting to talk to. Mr Rentoul condemned fads. His advice to beekeepers was to accept a good line of management instead of experiments, which could be left to those so inclined.

Mr Butler then gave a demonstration of a number of his own patents connected with the hives and packing house.

At the conclusion, after a most enjoyable day had been spent by all, the President, Mr Smithers, thanked Mr O'Brien, M.P., for performing the opening ceremony, and also Mr Earp and Mr Rentoul for their interesting addresses. He extended very hearty thanks to Mr and Mrs Butler for the pleasant time and for the fine afternoon tea which they and other ladies had provided for them.

BEEKEEPERS' MEETING.

On Saturday evening at Trinity Hall, Mr T. Smithers presided over a large meeting of beekeepers. Mr Earp, Mr Rentoul and Mr Page were amongst those present. An apology was received for absence from Mr J. O'Brien, M.P.

Mr Page addressed the meeting on the necessity for advertising on the local market, and, to this end, of making use of the A. and P. Show.

Two cups were submitted for a choice to be made of one to be donated to the A. and P. Association for the honey classes and one of the cups was selected.

Mr Earp in his address spoke of marketing overseas. He said that Mr Rentoul had paid a visit overseas to

investigate various matters affecting their sale of honey on the Home market. If they were to hold their own on a market of which, they had made a certain success, and to maintain it, they had to stand by their New Zealand organisation. The way the Home market had been guarded had brought New Zealand to the front. Canada was starting to organise to-day and was making every effort to capture the market on similar lines to New Zealand. The great thing was to maintain a continuity of supply. By having large quantities to sell, one stood in a better position. The New Zealand Honey Control Board made it better for supplies in quantity and quality, and unless the beekeepers stood behind the organisation, they would go back to where they were ten years ago. Honey varied considerably, and consequently one had a mixed article to sell. If one were in an organisation one would be in the position to ship honey indiscriminately to London. If the beekeepers of New Zealand organised as other countries were doing, they would capture a great deal of the world market.

Mr Rentoul exhibited photos of window and show displays in various parts of the United Kingdom, which gave a prominent position in every instance to New Zealand "Imperial Bee" honey, and also showed the methods of marketing in the Old Country. He said that some producers had recently criticised the H.P.A. with an idea of breaking away. The present state of the world trade was at bedrock, but it was coming on when he left the Old Country. Honey had not, however, suffered to the same extent as other products, and they had been able to hold their own with sales and prices. The New Zealand exports were 500 tons per year up to 1928, and they then jumped up to 1038 tons, and extra trade had to be found. In the next year the exports increased to 1,100 tons, whilst sales were going on at the normal rates, and 500 to 600 tons was being sold annually. At present, the sales were equal to those at this time last year, and were very satisfactory, but they wanted to double the present

this year unfortunately, but it would give them a chance to get off overloaded stock. The production this season in Canterbury was half of the normal amount, as was the case also in the North Island. The Coast output was yet to come, and he hoped it would be satisfactory, but thought it would be also only half the normal amount. The bulk of the honey came from Canterbury and the Waikato. Sales were increasing in packed honey, but bulk sales were decreasing. On a competitive market, the New Zealand below-standard honey had to compete with others, and as prices had fallen so low, they could not sell in any quantity at the prices required and advanced to beekeepers. It meant that table honey not suitable for packing would have to go down in price. He showed where honey offered by auction on the Home markets was a failure as it did not sell. There was a big field for development in the Old Country, and New Zealand was working on the right lines to get the bulk of the trade. New Zealand had a hopeful future in their export trade. Furthermore they were in a position to export direct. Concerning the Honey Producers' Association, the West Coast beekeepers stood by them more than others. The Honey Producers' Association was a co-operative one and unless there was co-operation on the part of the beekeepers who promoted it, it could not give efficient results. Their biggest and best market was their local one, as they sold from two-thirds to four-fifths of their production in New Zealand, which meant that New Zealand consumed 2000 tons annually. They had also no competition. Concerning honey itself, it was the finest food in the world, and he always kept thinking that people would wake up and discover its great value. Honey was a small factor in the Old Country, as it

was only used at the rate of a-quarter of a pound per head, whereas in New Zealand it was used at the rate of three pounds per head. Comparing butter with honey, it was only through the factories standardising it that butter production became so great an industry and enabled them to build up an export trade, whereas people of over 40 years ago hawked butter around and sold it at 6d a pound in bulk.

In reply to a question, Mr Earp said that, with the present price of honey he would not recommend anyone to start an apiary on which to make a living unless it was decided to put down 300 to 400 colonies. It would cost approximately £1000 to buy out right that number of good Italian colonies. A beekeeper with full knowledge of the business could start at less cost by using smaller colonies and working up. Half an acre of land would meet the case, and one man could attend to the colonies, with some assistance in the extracting house.

Mr Airey asked if the Department of Agriculture had ever considered the idea of an inspector to assist budding beekeepers by means of an apiary to be maintained by the Government as an experimental apiary. Mr Earp, in answer, said that it had not been considered, but beekeepers would, he considered, be better served by a State apiary that would assist beekeepers in starting off. Some schools were doing it where they had agricultural instructors. Matamata and Feilding were places where the high schools provided scholars with a good insight into beekeeping. Some schoolmasters took an interest in it and had a number of colonies in the school gardens, but the next schoolmaster that came along would perhaps have no interest in bees and would not go near them, with the result "outski hives."

The President, Mr Smithers, then

urged upon those who had not joined the local Association to do so. It was only by co-operation, that they could hope to do anything.

Votes of thanks were accorded to Messrs Earp and Rentoul, being carried by acclamation.

Mr Earp, in acknowledging the vote, said that it gave him great pleasure to pay a visit to the West Coast. Those who had attended the recent conference on the West Coast had spoken in glowing terms of the hospitality extended.

Mr Rentoul in endorsing the remarks of Mr Earp said that he hoped any complaints would be sent forward.

The Chairman said he had overlooked an important matter, and that was that he hoped that honey would not be taken to Auckland to be graded, as had been the case in one instance, as there was no reason for it, for they had a good grading store at Greymouth.

Mr Rentoul explained that the honey had not been taken away on that occasion to be graded for export. It was for the local trade. If it had been graded by the Government grader at Greymouth, it would have had to be exported. They had taken it because the supply at the time in New Zealand was running short through beekeepers selling their honey in a private way. It might happen again and he did not want them to think that it was being done in any way against the interests of the local Association. There was no grading in any stores last year for export, with the exception of 50 tons.