

# CORRESPONDENCE

## THE HONEY INDUSTRY.

(To the Editor.)

Sir.—Some weeks ago, during my absence from the West Coast, a letter appeared in the "Argus" in which Mr Penny, a North Island correspondent took me to task regarding the question of honey control and assured readers the Control Board was getting results highly satisfactory to the great majority of exporters; and that the marketing of New Zealand honey in England was the envy of the other honey-producing organisations overseas. It would have been most interesting had he given some details of those satisfactory results and explained why our producers do not export their honey instead of dumping it on the local market, at the unpayable prices that have ruled for several years. He does not deny that the advance made at shipment is 1½d per lb. on which interest has to be paid. He also admits a period of 18 months intervenes between the shipment and the sales. Under these circumstances it is indeed remarkable that our overseas selling arrangements are envied by anyone acquainted with the actual facts. When I was allowed to export I could obtain very much better returns and complete payments in five months; but the Control Board continues to refuse me permission to export. In the North Island I was assured of a hearty welcome at the conference of the National Beekeepers' Association held at Hamilton on June 19th and 20th and I was prevailed upon to remain an additional week in Auckland to attend it. On the afternoon of the first day the chairman of the Honey Control Board spoke, and his address was distinguished more by its politics than details of export operations. In reply to one producer he admitted that a line of local honey had been sold through the board in bulk in London for 70s per cwt., representing over 9d per lb. in New Zealand currency, for which the shipper would receive less than 5d per lb. under the pooling system, by which payment is allocated by the Control Board. Immediately following I was, at a moment's notice, invited to reply.

To claim that producers expressing views other than those paraded by the executive members of the association received a hearty welcome is an exquisite piece of irony. I was very surprised to hear Mr Campbell, director of the Horticultural Division in his official capacity, claim that the bankrupt Honey Producers' Association had served a very useful purpose, in view of widespread distress that now prevails in the industry as the sequel to its disastrous policy, which is or ought to be, well known to him.

At least one Canterbury apiarist was compelled to invoke the protection of the Bankruptcy Court to resist the seizure of the whole of his 1935 crop, in satisfaction of one of actions numbering over 700, taken last year against former exporters of honey through this company. In a defended action it was elicited that for the year 1928, in respect to which action was taken, out of approximately £135,000 received by the company for the sale of honey, £100,000 was absorbed in expenses.

With regard to the abnormal amount of verbiage indulged in at the conference about foul brood, registration levy (really a proposed new tax), duty-free sugar, etc., there was the inescapable inference that it was designed to monopolise the time of the conference and play the part of a red

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herring across the real issue—a rational and efficient marketing policy.

In the report of the conference, published in the official organ of the association, Mr Clark is credited with moving a resolution to take steps to capably answer any press criticism alleging mismanagement of the industry. I would be very grateful to Mr Clark if he could disabuse producers of the belief that the present chaotic conditions have been created by mismanagement. My previous published charge that there is no market for New Zealand honey in the United Kingdom still remains unanswered. Since control has been enforced the distribution and sale of our honey in the United Kingdom and the Continent of Europe have been the sole right of the creditors of a New Zealand company during a period of its insolvency and liquidation, an arrangement that is still current.

Since leaving the North Island I have been invited to accept a seat on the executive of the Dominion Beekeepers' Association, an organisation that has been formed in an endeavour to have honey producers' interests safeguarded and make representations to the authorities on behalf of those who have not been satisfied with the way these matters have been dealt with in the past. I have accepted on condition that a very serious effort is made to have the operation of the Honey Control Act investigated and the industry relieved of the wasteful overhead costs that have brought it to the brink of ruin. If the Executive Commission of Agriculture, a statutory body that has been invested with the authority to carry out such a duty, cannot be prevailed upon to take appropriate steps to achieve that end, then we must petition Parliament for the repeal of the Honey Export Control Act. I am etc.

JOHN MURDOCH.

Ross, Westland.