

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS 1979 A.G.M. AND CONFERENCE OF N.B.A.

If you look back over past President's speeches you will find that they have been gradually changing from being reports of the Association's activities for the past year to a pure address. It is my intention to carry this trend further. If you want a report of the Association's activities it is in the Annual Report prepared by the General Secretary. It is my intention in this address to look not at the past but at the future.

In spite of the clouds of gloom and despondency forecast by some of our members I see a bright future. As an indication of this we should look at the results being achieved by the producers and exporters of honeydew. We should look at the excellent prices the Authority is now receiving and we should look at the continuing excellent results being achieved by the Comb Honey Producers. Another indication is the trend in private exports of packed lines.

As I said there are indications of an excellent future however we will have to work at it. The first thing we must realize is that we live in a changing world and the correct way of doing things yesterday may not be right today and almost certainly will not be right by tomorrow. I see a trend in the Industry to stick with that which we know and to try to patch it up somehow. I see also a reluctance in some areas to even consider that there may be an alternative. As in any venture there are two directions, either we advance or we go under. The only alternative is that we may be able to vary the rate at which we sink. Looking to the future I believe the time is ripe now for the Industry to have a long hard look at itself and its hopes and ambitions. There are rumour of, and indeed requests for, a production levy on all honies to help to prop up the H.M.A. I don't believe a temporary measure such as this is in the best long or short term interests of the industry. Surely it is time to stop arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. If the Authority cannot make a go of it in the commercial world, and this is not yet proven, then it is time to look at alternatives.

The first move is to ascertain whether or not the Authority is doing as poorly as the Annual Report for the year ending August 1978 appears to show. To achieve this I would strongly recommend that the H.M.A. should employ an independant Accountant or Business Consultant to examine the workings of the Authority in some depth and to prepare a report on it's past performance with recomendations for its future. This to be done as a matter of extreme urgency. If this report indicates that the result of the poor showing was caused by the variations in the opening and closing stocks and that honey was not sold at lower than base price as stated on page 2 of the 1978 Annual Report then suppliers to the Authority in that year were almost certainly underpaid and suppliers in 1979 will be overpaid and this aspect will need to be examined. However if, as I believe it will, the report indicates that change is necessary then I feel the industry would be well advised to look outside its own fund of knowledge and ask advice from leaders of other industries. This could be done at both local and national levels. After this has been done and not before a decision could be made on which option or options the industry requires This would be best done by poll.

The industry has many options open to it. The main ones have been presented to us in a news sheet based on a paper prepared by the Government representatives on the H.M.A. It is my hope that the industry will consider these options seriously. The consequences of not doing so could be rather drastic and final and will among other things mean the likely end of the Authority. One interesting aspect of these options is that the solution for the South Island could well be different from the solution for the North Island. The problems of the two Islands are very different, The North Island consumes its total production while the South Island produces about 1000 tonnes surplus. It could well be that the South Island needs the Authority and the North Island doesn't. This difference should be taken into account if and when the poll is taken.

In my opening remarks I mentioned the trend in private exports of packed

lines. There has been some criticism of the Authority's allowing private exports of packed lines at the industries request. I imagine there will be a renewed call for a halt especially in view of the fact that these exports have shown up the inability of the Authority to compete in paying the producer the best price. The indications are that private packers will be buying an extra 400 tonnes this year to service the export market. An increase in two years from nothing to 400 tonnes is very significant especially when the Authority has only just reached last years export totals with 10 months of the year gone. At this rate there will be a shortage of honey in this country in the very near future. Any extra bought by the private packer is purchased in competition with the Authority and it is normal practice for the private packer to pay more to obtain the honey. This extra honey also brings about a reduction in the bulk exports of the Authority and is part of the reason for the Authority's present problems. Those asking for a halt in the private exports have argued that this reduction causes increased costs in the Authority however I believe that this is not the case, at least, to any significant degree. Where the problem arises is that the Authority does not have sufficient bulk export honey to subsidize the local market. I imagine that Mr Berry will expand further on this in his report to you later.

The point is are we going to say no to these higher prices and stick with what we have or are we going to endeavour to make these higher prices available to all producers. The former choice is commonly called cutting off your nose to spite your face.

In part the problems we are suffering at present are of our own doing and are caused by our inability to work together, and our distrust of each others motives. Once again this could be caused by the different problems peculiar to each Island. Yet we are all beekeepers striving for the same ultimate goal. Surely we would be happier if the H.M.A. Suppliers supplied and controlled their own organisation or co-op and the private packers were not controlled by them, but that both parties were controlled by a separate export control body. I believe we will have to change; the political climate

indicates this; the economic difficulties indicate this, and the marketing results indicate this. If we are to have change let us be the authors of this change.

In conclusion I would like to thank the General Secretary and his staff in Wellington. I would like to thank the Ministry staff both personally and on behalf of all beekeepers. I would like to thank the members of the Executive for their support over the year especially Mr Dickinson and Mr Berry both of whom held the office of president and both of whom are retiring from the N.B.A. Executive.

Mike Stuckey.