

2 February 1993

Mr Mike Moore, MP
Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
WELLINGTON

Dear Mr Moore

I can remember quite clearly your talk that opened the **National Beekeepers Association** Conference in Dunedin, nearly four years ago now. I was impressed with what you had to say. Rather than simply talk complete generalities, or take the 'cheap shot' of making endless jokes about bees and beekeeping (Why is it that people don't realise that beekeepers have *heard* all of them?), you gave us a well-reasoned picture of how we got where we were, and some first thoughts toward visions that might help our industry to lift itself. After years of depressing political clap-trap in that opening speech role (bringing to mind Trevor Maxwell, god help us, several years before, and Doug Kidd several years after...) it was a real pleasure to hear.

The reason I'm writing to you is because of your current set of comments related to the Government and MAF's management of the **shellfish poisonings**. I found them very topical, as we (the National Beekeepers Association) have just finished working on our submission on the **Biosecurity Bill**. I would like to bring a few aspects of it to your attention and call on you to protect us (There, now, how can you turn down a plea like that, eh?)

When you were quoted as saying that the shellfish poisonings were the marine equivalent of foot and mouth, the implications for the future were just too much for me to pass by. I really don't think many people realise the long term implications on pest and disease management strategies that will be brought into play with the Biosecurity Bill. Though it seems likely that a disease as politically volatile as foot and mouth **will** be responded to (far be it from *me* to suggest a political buy-off!), the future management strategies for many, many other organisms will not be so clear cut a responsibility.

Our industry has kept a pretty close eye on the Biosecurity Bill for a number of years now, watching its slow, often tortuous, development through to its current content. Though generally concerned and interested, it wasn't until I really sat with a critical eye to read the Bill that the enormity of the whole thing hit me.

For small industries such as beekeeping, especially, this Bill will effectively disenfranchise us from the sense of protection we have enjoyed since the first Apiaries Act back in 1906. Its not well known, I guess, but New Zealand has led the world in apicultural legislation. We are still viewed with envy because of our relative freedom from pests and diseases and because of the sense of well-managed security the industry has been afforded. Now, mark that last word - **afforded**. That word, if the Biosecurity Bill is enacted, will become paramount. Industries will only be able to have as much biosecurity as they can afford.

The real irony, however, is that the control, standard setting, final say on management methods - even the choice of inspectors - will not belong to the industry! Now, I'll admit to having a devious mind - I *doread* Bills such as this with the worst case in mind. But you don't have to read very hard to see that the **MAF Regulatory Authority will become a cost-plus provider** of services that it gets to choose. It will effectively tell us what the administrative processes related to a Pest Management Strategy entail and then charge us (the industry) for the full amount! Then, even worse, there are provisions to charge back virtually all other overheads in any way related to the Bill to the industries concerned!

Here is my real objection, Mr Moore - **biosecurity is a national asset**. Border protection, emergency response for exotic introductions and management of endemic pests and diseases should certainly involve industries in the decision making, but ultimately should be a responsibility and service provided for the public good. **We all benefit from keeping our clean, green image**. Not only are the services described more cost effective (economies of scale) provided but, philosophically, it simply makes good sense. In our submission we have drawn the parallel to the management of physical security, provided through police and armed services - these are still (properly) considered in the public good.

Mr Moore, we're a small industry - there are only about 150 full time beekeeping operations in the whole country. We are, however, innovative, responsive, market-led, export oriented and a damn fine set of people! We produce about **10,000 tonnes of excellent honey**, and export about one third of it. We are developing not only a number of value-adding products, but trying to exploit every last little corner available to us - **honey mead** from the Gisborne area, **specialty source gift packs** from Canterbury, and research into **manuka honey to cure stomach ulcers** are three areas that come to mind that have received recent publicity that you might have seen.

We need help. If the Biosecurity Bill is passed, our industry will simply not be able to afford to respond to European foulbrood (remember the suspected outbreak in Nelson a little over a year ago? In the future, we'd never even know it was there until it was spread through the whole country), Africanised bees (unless *maybe* a Minister of Health decided to fund a strategy), and three varieties of mites that most of the world has that we don't.

We have a **potentially great future in the export of queens bees and packages** of bees to the rest of the world - with the spread of the pests and diseases everywhere else, we sit in a prime position of 'clean and green' again, ready and able to make the most of our isolation (which works so much against us when trying to sell product on the other side of the world!). If we can't remain free of the pests and diseases, ready to respond with containment and eradication if there is an outbreak, we'll simply watch those opportunities vanish.

OK, enough of my raving - if strong feeling alone was enough, you'd see I could handle this all on my own! It's not enough - we need political support, and that is why I am writing to

you. If, during the Select Committee stage of the Biosecurity Bill or later, you would like to call on beekeepers for any particular information or our expectations of consequences, I certainly hope you will do so. Please feel free to use me as a point of contact if you like (I am on the National Executive and try to keep my ear to the ground, though the image seems rather ludicrous...).

Yours sincerely

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