

SPEECH NOTES

HON DENIS MARSHALL  
ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

TO

NATIONAL BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND  
1993 CONFERENCE

CROYDON LODGE, GORE  
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Delivered on behalf of the Hon Denis Marshall by Mrs Margaret Moir, MP  
for the West Coast.

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Introduction

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen ...

Mr Marshall has asked me to thank you for the invitation to address your annual conference again. Unfortunately it seems that as with the 1992 conference, fate and Parliamentary duties prevail, and so I have been asked to deliver his speech on his behalf.

It looks as if I'm Queen Bee for the day! \* *Husband was a hobby bee-keeper*

Economics and Government Policies

New Zealand has seen substantial change since this Government took office in 1990. No-one will forget in a hurry the changes that this government had to effect so soon after coming into office.

But mixed with those are the things this Government has done to aid industry and the economy.

The Employment Contracts Act and the Health and Safety in Employment Act have dramatically changed the responsibilities employers and employees have to each other.

Giving freedom to employers and employees to reach contractual agreements which are in line with industry needs has made the New Zealand labour force competitive in a way we have not seen in decades.

Economic indicators show continued improvement. Inflation has been held steady at around one percent for the last eighteen months; interest rates are slowly moving down to around 10% for small business, but have a way to go yet.

Our terms of trade are improving. The Government's share of the total national debt is being reduced as a percentage of gross domestic product.

In the long term this means New Zealand is more competitive, more productive, and in total, wealthier. Inevitably this will be reflected in an increased standard of living for all New Zealanders.

\* So, what has the Government done for the productive sector? \*

New Zealand agricultural producers got the message over a decade ago that the days of intervention and subsidies are over.

Instead of protecting our producers from competition we are encouraging producers to be more competitive as part of an international market place.

The Closer Economic Relations agreement with Australia and New Zealand's commitment to the GATT Uruguay Round with other agricultural producing nations will set the international scene.

This Government will continue with its policies of persuading our own producers, and the Governments of other nations to dismantle the full range of non technical trade barriers.

But we also realise that the Government has a responsibility to give a framework to agricultural producers so that they can make the most of the potential they have.

Legislation - Commodity Levies Act (Amendment)

One piece of legislation that I have been actively involved in introducing to Parliament this year has been the Commodity Levies Amendment Bill. This Bill will amend the Commodity Levies Act 1990.

This is an important piece of legislation for your Association.

The Government recognises that some organisations, like yourselves, deal with large numbers of widely scattered individuals whose involvement in the industry varies considerably.

This often makes it difficult to obtain a definitive response to levy proposals.

It is also recognised that many beekeepers, farmers and horticulturalists are not sufficiently interested or willing to respond to surveys or referendums or to attend meetings and make their views known. Many prefer to leave such matters to their elected representatives.\*

The Commodity Levies Act requires the Minister of Agriculture to be satisfied that considerably more than half of all potential levy payers are in favour of the levy before it is introduced.

This has proved to be a difficult task for too many organisations similar to the National Beekeepers' Association.

There are 5,717 beekeepers in New Zealand. Commercial operators with 50 or more hives account for 551 with the remaining 5,166 being hobbyists.

*less than 10%*

To be equitable, the levy should cover all beekeepers. The logistics and costs of obtaining a response from hobbyist beekeepers would prove prohibitive.

The amendment will require the Minister to be satisfied before recommending the making of a levy order, that a referendum demonstrates that:



- (a) more than half of the potential levy payers, who participate in a referendum, support the imposition of a levy; and
- (b) those in support must represent at least half the total production, or area, or things (like hives) of all those who participate.

In other words if you as an organisation could satisfy the Minister that a referendum took place canvassing all beekeepers and that a substantial number participated in the referendum.

And of those who respond, more than half say yes to a levy order.

And that those who say yes represent a substantial proportion of the investment in beekeeping of the total of those who respond to the referendum.

Then the Minister may be satisfied that a levy order be placed.

Presently the Minister has to be satisfied that more than half of all those who may have to pay some part of the total levy must say yes.

Those who don't respond to a referendum are deemed to be against a levy. For the National Beekeepers' Association this is an impossible situation.

The Act will still contain its original safeguards to protect individuals. These include:

- (a) restricting the use of levies;
- (b) prescribing the requirements to be met before the Minister can recommend a levy order be made.
- (c) prescribing the requirements to be carried out by groups that are recipients of a compulsory levy;
- (d) conscientious objector provisions;
- (e) provision for the resolution of disputes;



- (f) provision for keeping records and accountability to levy payers;
- (g) a sunset clause on all levy orders;
- (h) the levy order confirmation requirements; and
- (i) the provision of compliance audits.

The Amendment will require that support for a levy is measured by means of a properly constituted referendum. It is still necessary to measure the support of all potential levy payers.

However, the principle change is that if beekeepers choose not to respond to the referendum, they will not jeopardise the wishes of the majority of those who do choose to respond.

You should be aware that the Hive Levy Act 1978 will be repealed on 31 December 1995. Therefore to maintain a compulsory levy for the activities of the Association, the Association will have to have a levy order in place under the Commodity Levies Act ~~in place~~ by that date - just over two years from now.

#### Other Legislation

Other legislation that has or will have an impact of agricultural producers are the Resource Management Act, which details environmental responsibilities and the Biosecurity Bill.

I note your submission to the Biosecurity Bill. I expect the Select Committee to report this Bill back within the next few weeks.

I urge you to follow the passage of these two very important pieces of legislation.

#### Government Involvement in Industry

The Government is not afraid of getting involved in the agricultural industry. We closely monitor all sectors of the economy.

You will recall Mr Falloon's and my recent involvement in the kiwifruit industry, and now the pipfruit industry deregulation issues.

But it is very important to note that Government involvement goes only so far as the regulatory framework and only at the request of the industry.

### Live Bee Trade

The Live Bee trade has been fraught with difficulties this year. It is very lucrative for beekeepers. However, there are a number of access, transport and quarantine difficulties that need to be resolved to make the trade more certain.

New Zealand has made significant sales of live bees to Canada and Korea. Recent sales have been recorded at over \$1.8 million.

Korea is a new market with great potential, but it is very difficult to negotiate market access conditions. Also, there are no direct freight services with Canada or Korea.

However, New Zealand is hoping for better access in 1994 with direct air routes recently being the subject of negotiation between the prime Minister and the Korean Government.

MAF will be discussing the transit of bees through Hawaii with the US Department of Agriculture for 1994 and beyond.

The US advice is that they will need to change their Federal law to allow transit. There are indications that they are prepared to consider a change provided satisfactory packaging can be agreed.

I have also had very encouraging correspondence with Canadian officials and offering their diplomatic support in this situation.

*\* NZ how to understand us you do we are part of a World economy.*

### Import Protocols

Perhaps the most contentious issue in the industry at the moment is the development of protocols for the trade of honey products between New Zealand and Australia.

These started in February of 1992. Immediately beekeepers and your Association made representations to me and MAF.

This culminated in meetings with myself and also the Government's Agriculture Caucus and MAF Officials.

At this meeting the Association was informed of the decision by MAF to stop further development of the draft conditions until ALL the technical issues raised during the last round of consultations could be researched.

Among the issues currently under further evaluation are the following:

- (a) the epidemiology of European foul brood disease (EFB), with specific reference to determining the infectious dose of the causative organism Melissococcus pluton (M.pluton);
- (b) the efficacy of the heat treatment to inactivate M.pluton;
- (c) the efficacy of the sampling/culturing methods for M.pluton;
- (d) the differences, if any, between the New Zealand and Australian strains of American foul brood disease (AFB);
- (e) the efficacy of the safeguards for preventing the introduction of AFB; should they also include a culture for the presence of the causative organism (Bacillus larvae).

The process from now is very clear.

MAF will continue to research the technical animal health issues raised as a result of the last consultative round.

A revised risk analysis paper will be prepared which will include a quantitative assessment of the risks of Australian honey introducing EFB into New Zealand.

If there is a satisfactory outcome to the analysis, revised health conditions will be prepared which will incorporate all the necessary safeguards.



Near the end of this year the revised papers will be circulated. Early next year the submissions will be analysed, and provided no new technical issues are raised that have not been answered, the conditions will become available for use.

From an agricultural security viewpoint, the establishment of conditions to allow entry of heat treated Australian honey is vastly preferable to the current situation.

The availability of some Australian honey which is acceptable in New Zealand will reduce the risk of illegal imports.

Border Service staff currently intercept a large quantity of Australian honey each year most of which are small consignments intended as gifts.

It is expected that the vast majority of trade in Australian honey will be as small personal consignments accompanying travellers or as gift packs through the mail.

Little commercial trade is anticipated as both countries are net honey exporters.

If after further research there is no technical basis established for the total exclusion of Australian honey, to continue with the present policy is inconsistent with CER and New Zealand's international position on trade.

If however, a valid technical reason not to allow Australian honey into New Zealand is established then MAF will not continue with the development of the protocols.

#### Exotic Disease Control

MAF has listened to the constructive comments from the industry concerning the response to the Nelson emergency.

A number of recommendations for handling any future outbreaks have been adopted.

MAF officers skilled in running an Emergency Headquarters, mapping, organising field teams, etcetera have been taken onto the bee response team and trained in beekeeping systems.

This has increased MAF's capacity to handle any future disease outbreaks.

There have been two suspected disease situations since Nelson.

In both cases specimens were sent to a lab for a second opinion and the response teams were put on standby. Both samples proved to be negative.

#### Endemic Disease Control

Disease control is a very important aspect of beekeeping. The industry has had a contract with MAF Quality Management to inspect a number of apiaries for American foul brood disease and to carry out extension work amongst other things.

This is funded out of a levy on all beekeepers with 50 or more hives. The Hive levy was increased for 1993 in part to fund this service.

In 1993 MAF will inspect 1050 apiaries. A further 1450 apiaries will be inspected through "disease-athons" organised by your branches.

I realise that you are concerned that not enough hives are being inspected but the responsibility for this activity clearly lies with your industry.

#### Apicultural Service

I am pleased to note that a new appointment has been made to the MAF Apicultural Service. He is David McMillan who will work from Invermay in Dunedin.

The MAF apiculture team now consists of six apicultural advisory officers. Service to the industry has also been strengthened by multi-skilling MAF Livestock and Field Officer staff into apiculture areas.

I was pleased to receive a letter of commendation from the Bay of Plenty Branch about the services of the apiculture advisory staff. Such

correspondence is, I think, a good indication of the positive impact the service is having on the industry.

### 1080 Repellent Tests

New Zealand's fight for Tb control has two main facets. Firstly movement control of cattle and deer, and secondly direct control of possum numbers.

The most effective current method of controlling possum numbers is by using 1080 poison baits. Unfortunately these baits also affect bees.

The National Beekeepers' Association has made representations to myself and the Minister of Agriculture, as well as the MAF. The problem has been known about for some time.

Over the last two years trials for a successful additive to the baits to repel bees have been trialled. The Animal Health Board has reported some success.

Until the correct repellent is found I urge you to continue to work in cooperation with the Animal Health Board.

### Final Comments

Finally, on behalf of Mr Marshall, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I must apologise again for his late withdrawal from the conference.

If there are any issues you would like me to take back to Wellington, please let me know.

Mr Marshall has asked me to let you know that his door is open to your representations and that he hopes to continue the excellent understanding and working relationship that has developed between the bee industry through the Association and the Government.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you.