

President's Report — 1997 Annual Meeting

Those of you have either heard or read the last two President's Reports that I have delivered at the Annual Meeting will know that I have used a 'historical' theme. I have done this as a means of reminding us that many of our issues are not entirely new, and that there are things we *can* learn from the past. I will continue that approach for this, my third and final President's Report. I won't be going back *quite* so far into the history of the Association this time, but will confine the historical material to that of this city in which we are meeting.

While there have been annual conferences of the NBA going back to the early years of the century, it wasn't until 1961 that such a meeting was held in Nelson.

Let's put that time into context. Billy Bray, Peter Bray's grandfather, had just recently been asked by the Executive to write a history of the beekeeping industry.

Vince Cook, had just become an apiary instructor at Oamaru.

Beekeepers were busy discussing an "Apiaries Registration Fee" — they didn't call it a Commodity Levy back then. The Department of Agriculture didn't want this registration to jeopardise disease control and insisted that such a scheme must have the general support of producers.

At meetings such as the North Otago Field Day, NBA members would gather to discuss the future of the industry in much the same way as today.

The Executive, just prior to Conference, agreed that the annual Dominion Conference should be opened with a prayer, and a suitable form of prayer was adopted — as near as I can tell, in the same form you heard it earlier today.

Dudley Lorimer, Tony's father, stood for election to the Honey Marketing Authority.

Dudley Ward was advertising a motorised barrow — look carefully and you'll see young James Ward on the roof of the truck!

The Dominion Conference was run by President Jim Barber. His Annual Report began "Every year brings fresh problems. The past year has been no different. The only difference is in the problems themselves. This is what we tell ourselves year after year, but we err. Because there is one major problem which has been with us for years and has been steadily growing in size and importance."

The problem that he perceived was APATHY, and the need for beekeepers to become self-reliant and step out from under the umbrella of the Welfare State. I don't think there is a lot of that umbrella left, by the looks of education, health and the government-funded advisory service these days.

When I was reading the Conference notes, I was struck by a headline. "Farewell 'Foul Brood'." What? Did the industry decide to eliminate AFB all the way back then? Was the goal of our PMS attempted more than 35 years ago? As it turned out, the plan was less ambitious: The NBA of the day wanted to stop referring to the disease as 'American foulbrood' and call it 'Bacillus larvae'.

A frightening aspect to me as President was that this Conference had 46 remits for consideration!

Considerable discussion took place on the need for an appropriate means to fund the industry activities, in the form of a 'Hive Registration Fee'.

It was at this 1961 Conference that Mr C R Paterson was made a life member of the NBA. When accepting the honour, Roy Paterson claimed a record for the shortest term ever as a branch president, as the first President of the North Otago branch. He resigned 15 minutes later to take up the office of branch secretary! You'll hear more of Mr Roy Paterson later in this Conference.

Mr T L Cropp was President of the Nelson Branch during this 1961 Conference. By the next time we met in Nelson, 1973, his son Phillip Cropp was performing the same role!

Ivan Dickinson was NBA President for that conference.

The NBA at that time was going through yet another serious financial crisis. I don't know that we fully appreciate how fortunate we are to have the reserves that we currently enjoy, and the freedom for action that they provide to our Association.

Again, for the personalities of the day, you can see that there are a number of multi-generation beekeeping families. That conference involved Glassons, Berrys, Cloakes, Herrons and Haines — I believe that every one of those families is still represented at this conference.

Accommodation at the newly opened Rutherford Hotel was \$17.50 for a twin room. There was a new apicultural advisor for Southland — Trevor Bryant.

Murray Reid was also working as an advisory officer, not that long in the job.

The NBA was working to a new set of rules for 1973, and a number of the remits reflected the uncertainty of their meanings. Otago called for one man one vote, saying that voting on hive holdings wasn't really representative. The remit was not carried. There were 51 remits to conference that year!

Just four months after conference, a letter from an American hobbyist appeared in the NZ Beekeeper magazine, seeking employment in the industry. That was my introduction to NZ beekeeping.

That brings us up to the last conference held in Nelson, in 1983. By that time, I had taken up a new job at the Bay of Plenty Community College.

Paul Marshall presented the first report from the newly formed Apicultural Unit at Telford, and we continue with that tradition at this conference with a report from David Woodward, newly appointed to a similar position at Telford.

Tony Clissold did not seek re-election at the conference, being followed by Ian Berry.

Mike Stuckey nominated "A young man I think has a contribution to make and who will go far in the industry, Allen McCaw" to the position of Vice-President. He joined Tony Lorimer on the Executive.

The gavel still used by the NBA was presented by the final HMA chairman, Ivan Dickinson. It had been presented previously to Russell Poole by the Honey marketing Authority staff.

And once again, we find ourselves in Nelson. While many of the problems have changed considerably, they have a basic similarity. Two themes that emerge are the control of AFB and the funding of the Association.

Since delivering my last President's Address, major changes have occurred in both of these areas.

Pest Management Strategy

The NBA has continued the tortuous process of doing what is necessary to maintain the disease control programme we require. AFB was first regulated in 1906. If no Pest Management Strategy is in place by October 1998, little more than one year from now, AFB will be, effectively, deregulated.

You will hear later in conference that the PMS has been notified by the Associate Minister of Agriculture. The Disease Control Committee is continuing with the work required to ensure the effective implementation of the Strategy once it has been approved.

I believe the degree of consultation and communication to date

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has allowed for any beekeeper to be kept fully informed. My views differ from some on the Executive - it was recently suggested we should send a fully copy of the PMS, 100 pages at a cost of approximately \$10 each, to all beekeepers with more than 50 hives. Simply spending money and chopping down trees will not lead to better understanding of the obligations and implications of the PMS. That can only come about through an interested and involved industry, recognising the responsibilities of the individuals to come to grips with the details of the strategy. I implore you all to do so.

Commodity Levies (Bee Products) Order 1996

The NBA has experienced a number of financial crises through its existence. During the periods of history I referred to earlier in my address, the Executive was obliged to write to branches asking that they forward the funds held by the branches for the use of the national organisation!

We are fortunate that we have financial reserves at the current time. They provide the 'backstop' that can allow the NBA the freedom to plan and operate without the constant worry of budget and cashflow restrictions.

With the promulgation of the Commodity Levies (Bee Products) Order 1996, the NBA has retained a degree of financial security.

Some say that if the NBA were providing the services to members appropriately, there would be no need for a compulsory levy system. While laudable in theory, I do not believe that ideal could apply to an industry as small as our own. As well, the fact that non-contributors would still be able to obtain much of the information and advantage that the Association provides would ensure ill-feeling and ultimately further reductions in contribution.

The levy as currently implemented is not ideal, by any means. The industry discussed the need for a levy system for fully 10 years, going back as far as the 1986 Conference held in Rotorua.

Over that time, a variety of ideas and approaches were investigated. Without going into the detail, I would remind you that ten years of Conferences and ten years of your National Executive members have worked to arrive at the system we have arrived at.

I recognise that some beekeepers are faced with a considerable increase in levy payable. I would also state some beekeepers have had their levy reduced. The total levy to be collected was designed to be the same as that collected by the Hive Levy.

Now that the NBA has obtained information contained in the Apiary Register (after the use of solicitors, Office of the Ombudsman and involvement of the Privacy Commissioner) we are confident that the amount potentially collectable exceeds budget to a small degree.

The challenge to the Executive, however, is to actually collect the levy due. The current levy collection, contrary to the expectations of some members of the Executive, is currently projected to produce a \$65,000 reduction in income expectation. When combined with the \$30,000 deficit budget that the Association is operating, this should be sending up all sorts of warning flags about financial controls and accountability!

Closing remarks

Having the support and confidence of this industry has been essential to me as your President for these last three years. I have received considerable personal satisfaction while doing the job, and I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

I will not be accepting nomination when the election for President is held tomorrow. You may well be aware of the tensions that have existed over the last few months within the Executive.

I would like to hope that the skills I do have to offer the beekeeping industry may be able to be appropriately utilised at some point in the future.