PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS to the 44th Conference, 1991

• R.P. POTTINGER

This is my final address as President of the NZWPCS. Last year I discussed the strengths of our society and the opportunities available to it. At that time I did not fully realize the magnitude of the changes about to take place in New Zealand science organization, funding and administration. I had intended to base my address to this conference on philosophical aspects of plant protection science, but because of the recommendations of the Ministerial Science Task Group (MSTG) and the adoption of their report by Government my aspirations to present a scientific address have been negated. Nine Crown Research Institutes (CRIs), spanning the primary land-based areas of production, industrial development and processing, and the physical and biological environments will be established by July, 1992. The issues arising from the reforms instituted by Government have heavily involved the Executive of this Society. The executive has consequently emerged as the strongest proponent amongst New Zealand's scientific societies for protection of the interests of plant protection research, with these issues having far-reaching effects on the Society.

The majority of plant protection scientists in New Zealand believe that the decisions made by the MSTG have considerably weakened plant protection science by fragmentation of it amongst 6 of the 9 proposed CRIs.

As pests, weeds, and pathogens span a multitude of host plants and animals, plant protection specialists working on specific problems, need to bridge primary production sectors in order to fully understand their ecology and develop IPM systems for them. Restriction of scientists to specific crops narrows their focus, the robustness of IPM systems developed, reduces the span of peer review and restricts the opportunity to maximise career development in the system of research organization proposed by the MSTG.

The proposed reorganization of science in New Zealand has also created an opportunity for the NZWPCS. We must accept the challenge at this annual meeting to provide the framework for co-ordination of plant protection research, science extension and commercial application professionals who comprise the membership of this Society. Similarly co-ordination between our society and other scientific disciplines/organizations needs to be fostered. This is a potential recognized by the MSTG in their final report on Crown Research Institutes in June, 1991 (Chapter 10, pp 58-59). I quote "We acknowledge that our proposed distribution of research capabilities (in plant protection) creates a potential for duplication of effort . . . We consider that there are a number of mechanisms to ensure continuing communication and collaboration between the science groups (located in the various CRIs involved in plant protection research). In particular, the New Zealand Weed and Pest Control Society has an important role in fostering this communication".

Many mechanisms to achieve such communication/co-ordination were outlined in my 1990 Presidential address. I will not repeat these, but I will address important, additional issues which have become obvious to the Executive as a result of its involvement in the science review process over the past year.

The MSTG requested submissions on CRIs from interested parties in February 1991 and after publication of their preliminary submissions to the Minister of Science in April, they called for further comment, before finalizing their official report. Consequently, as President, I convened the Executive and invited 10 senior members of the Society to consider the issues, in order to make a submission on behalf of the Society. Because of the short time (3 weeks) between receiving a verbal invitation and the submission deadline, it was not possible to circulate the members and co-ordinate their replies. Many members were consulted by the Executive, however. The two submissions made by the Society have been circulated to all members as a newsletter. After the first submissions had been considered by the MSTG, they conducted workshops with selected invited audiences on major research campuses throughout New

Zealand. Most senior working scientists and many learned Societies including the NZWPCS were not consulted, or included in the workshop process.

It was apparent that despite original statements by the MSTG they had fixed ideas on the structure of CRI's. In an attempt to rectify this situation I wrote to the Minister of Science as President, NZWPCS expressing concern. The response was negative, stating that scientific societies had been catered for in a workshop conducted by the Royal Society of New Zealand (RSNZ). As the NZWPCS is not an affiliate of the RSNZ we were overlooked and had not been invited. As a consequence we are not represented on the Federation of Scientific and Technical Societies committee (FOST), established to make recommendations on policy issues affecting scientific research to the Minister of Science. Consequently, (despite being approximately 10% of the scientific population in New Zealand) the voice of plant protection science is inadequately represented by FOST.

As a result of this and the failure of the MSTG to consult directly with the NZWPCS, I approached the Senior Executive of the RSNZ. The outcomes of this initiative were:

1. A 3 hour meeting between 6 senior members of the Society and 3 key members of the MSTG on the organization of plant protection research.
2. A meeting with the Senior Executive of the RSNZ and his deputy to discuss the possible association of our Society with the RSNZ.

The revised, final submission of the MSTG clearly indicates that it listened carefully to our representatives, and modified many of its original statements. For example, the MSTG used the Societies recommendations on the reallocation of plant protection programmes and competencies. More importantly it has acknowledged the contribution of the NZWPCS to New Zealand science, by naming the Society best placed to foster communication between plant protection scientists within the various proposed CRIs. It is also clear that the NZWPCS has a major role in science extension processes. During our discussions the need for CRI-funded specialist workshops in plant protection under the auspice of our Society were clearly acknowledged by MSTG members.

Discussion with the RSNZ executives clearly indicated to the NZWPCS Executive the need for affiliation of our Society with the RSNZ. This is essential in order to:

- a. Create an opportunity for plant protection science to be represented on FOST.
- b. Provide longer term opportunity for Government financial assistance to publication of our scientific proceedings and for conduct of specialist workshops.
- c. Allow our opinions to be directly represented through the channel provided by the RSNZ to the Minister of Science.

The discussions also revealed the need for the NZWPCS to reconsider its name. It very quickly became clear that the NZRS knew little about our Society and did not perceive us as a scientific society, despite the availability of our scientific proceedings or the success of our annual conferences. This was because of the emphasis of CONTROL in our name. For similar reasons the MSTG failed to formally invite us to make submissions.

It is for these reasons that the Executive have presented formal changes to our rules for your consideration at this AGM. If these can be positively addressed, I believe that the Society will be in a much stronger position to play a key role in the guidance and direction of plant protection research science extension and uptake in New Zealand. Our ability to act as lobbyists for plant protection will be considerably enhanced.

The past year has been a traumatic one for many members of the Society. Not only because of the activities of the MSTG, but also because of:

1. The economic recession which has curtailed funding for research, the lack of a national vision for science application, economic and social expansion, and lack of business activity.
2. The institution of new mechanisms in 1990 for funding research by the Foundation for Research Science and Technology (FORST) and auditing of research and recommendations on science policy to government by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MORST).

Preparation of cases for research funding involved every scientist in New

Zealand and in many instances was unnecessarily prolonged over several months for senior scientists and managers. The end result was a decline in science output at a time when New Zealand urgently needs new scientifically driven technologies to expand its economy.

3. Misfortune to members of the Society. Generally I do not like to single out individuals, but the manner in which Ian and Alison Popay have coped with Ian's crippling accident is a lesson in courage and perseverance to us all. Despite the pressure, they have coped not only with their personal situation, but Alison's heavy role as secretary and editor of this Society, work for which we can never thank her enough.

I would also like to thank our Treasurer, Lesley Stephens who has served us well over the past years who completes her term of office this year.

I have enjoyed my term as President and look forward to my continuing role on the Executive and service to this Society.

ANNUAL REPORT 1991-92

J.A. Zabkiewicz

The 44th Annual Conference was held at Tauranga, during August 13-15 at the Willow Park Hotel. There was a total of 71 papers presented with a keynote address on behalf of Dr A. West, MORST.

It was noted in the previous year's annual report that the scientific institutions were undergoing a major reorganisation during the current year. A similar situation occurred within the Society as not only did the name change to the NZ Plant Protection Society but also changed were the Secretary, Treasurer and to some extent the Editorial function, as well as the cyclical change of President.

This has been a testing year for the new Committee as they steer the society through these turbulent times. The expected change to the major science providers will have happened by the time of this conference. What the future will bring, apart from the immediate initial reductions of staff, is still of considerable concern to the Society and the New Zealand scientific community. This should make the Society more useful than ever before as a conduit for scientific and operational interactions. This is indicated by the fact that there have been more new members joining this past year than formal resignations, though there is still a considerable proportion of the membership who appear to be partially lapsed in their financial support.

The Committee will certainly play its part in maintaining the scientific and financial well-being of the Society.

NEW ZEALAND PLANT PROTECTION RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP

There were four applicants this year and the recipient chosen was **Timothy A. Jenkins** of the Biology Department of Canterbury University. Tim is working for his PhD with the thesis subject being "Fungal biological control of *Hieracium* species". After an initial three months at Canterbury, Tim will be based at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, Scotland for two years before returning to Canterbury to complete the work.