PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
to 36th Conference 1983
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The thing any President of an organisation least likes doing is to admit that at the end of his or her term of office the organisation is in any way worse off or has declined during their tenure. Sadly, I feel that this is what I must do. During my address last year, I said that our society was in good heart, and in terms of the number of papers coming forward and the general overall enthusiasm shown by our members, this is still true. But, from a financial viewpoint and from a critical review of membership numbers, we are suffering from what I can only describe as an alarming decline. The 1980/81 Annual Report quoted a membership of 356, but by the simple procedure of dividing the income derived from subscriptions by the membership fee of \$15 for the 1981/82 financial year, it was revealed that we had only 257 financial members in spite of nearly 400 names appearing in the Proceedings. It is, I feel, worthwhile to quote the following passage from the 1976 Annual Report. "... Membership of the Society continued to fall this year and now stands at 289. If the society is to survive a concerted membership drive is required." What was true then is equally so now, and I implore all of you to gather support for our society and to encourage membership amongst the contacts you have. If everybody could persuade just one other person to join what is surely a worthwhile and vital organisation, we would be in a very healthy situation indeed. Dr Barratt is doing some excellent work on membership, and has made several very good suggestions as to how we can increase membership. In the final analysis, however, it is up to all of us to actively promote our Society and "sell" the benefits of membership. The idea of a "Quarterly Review" type of publication as a way of attracting support of those people who feel the Proceedings are too scientific has had to be shelved. We have been unable to obtain the backing of 'AGCARM' for the venture, and without the guarantee of sufficient advertising revenue we cannot fund such a project or make it viable.

The financial situation is equally disastrous and is of course closely associated with membership numbers. It has, however, become very evident that with the end of the financial year so far removed from our Annual General Meeting, the Executive have very little flexibility insofar as financial management of the society is concerned. When cash flow projections show difficulties arising it is often 15-18 months before any corrective action by way of subscription changes can take place. This is the reason for the notice of motion to change our constitution which will enable your executive to take action as necessary within a much more realistic time frame. I hope you will all support the move. We are undergoing a period of severe economic constraint and this society, no differently from any other organisation, has been forced to curtail expenditure accordingly. We have, for example, deferred publication of Alan Upritchard's "Weeds in Colour" and are currently investigating various methods of financing it. We have not paid any secretarial expenses now for two years — thanks to the generosity of Dr Hartley (something few organisations of our type could do), and have been unable to help with travel or accommodation costs of the Executive members.

I believe it to be crucial that we sell in a much more positive manner the benefits of weed, pest and disease control. Simply saying how it can be done is not sufficient by itself and I find it surprising that so few papers attempt to give well presented and researched cost benefit equations. It is, after all, the bottom line which ultimately governs our entire industry — right from which crops are grown (be it pastoral or horticultural) through the inputs of production technology to harvesting and marketing. How much can we afford to spend at each step? If members could combine their individual expertise to produce this information, I am sure we would be hard pressed to keep up with the demand.

We hear these days a great deal of emotional and generally uninformed comment on the effects of pesticides on the environment, but do we stop and ask ourselves why it is uninformed? Do we do enough to make available the information on the extensive environment safeguards that the industry in fact makes? Could we as a Society do more in this direction? I believe we could and should. The environmental lobby is gaining ground. We cannot allow uninformed opinion to limit the use of these very valuable management tools. Of course to go along with this we must also promote the safe and efficient use of chemicals — last night was a good start, and I would like to see similar sessions in future years. The Hawke's Bay Branch organised a very successful seminar on pesticide resistance. How much research is going on as to the best strategies to overcome the problem, or establishing baseline data to give early warning of an incipient problem. We must learn to conserve our limited resource of chemicals. We cannot expect to have available a never ending supply of new action family chemicals. Careless use patterns can limit the useful life of many very valuable chemicals.

The last area I will briefly mention has already been touched on at this conference by Dr Brash in his opening address, and that is the subject of good hygiene in our export crops. He stated that fumigation of kiwifruit in Japan alone was costing N.Z. about \$800,000 per annum. Quarantine trade barriers are the easiest of all to establish — they are not seen to be political or related to home market protection from competition as such, in fact, they are seen to be just plain good old fashioned common sense. If N.Z. does not maintain a good reputation in our overseas markets regardless of how much we produce, it is valueless if we cannot sell it. Dr Wearing's group in Auckland is doing some excellent work on post harvest quarantine aspects — but how about pre-harvest managements to reduce pest pressures and lessening the likelihood of pests slipping through?

It remains for me to issue some thanks, first to you the members of the Society for having given me the chance to serve as your President for the last two years. I have enjoyed the experience. To the Executive for their hard work and support during this period, and of course in particular to Jennifer Hartley who does all the real work of the Society and makes the President's job so much easier. And last but by no means least, to the sessional chairmen and local organising committees who do so much to ensure the success our conferences undoubtedly are.