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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The first move to establish a National Weed Conference in this country was made in a tea shop in New Plymouth about 14 years ago. Credit must go to Mr D. A. Watkins for the suggestion and to Messrs M. A. Black, R. H. Bevin, and C. E. Iversen for the alacrity with which they committed their personal services and the facilities of the Agronomy Division of D.S.I.R. and of Lincoln College for the organisation and venue of the First Conference. Since then the conference has been growing and developing, but I take the excuse of this semblance of the start of a new cycle to look briefly at this development and indicate its bearing on our immediate future.

This conference has always had the objective to speed up the dissemination of information relating to weeds and their control. At first it was hoped to reach the farmer directly and in fact farmers were able to contribute valuable field application data at the early "College" conferences. After the first few conferences, however, the farmer support dwindled and it is now in effect a development and extension workers' conference. This doesn't exclude farmers from taking part (they are very welcome), but it does have the effect of getting new information to them in an assimilable form much more quickly than if this were dependent on farmer participation at conferences. Incidentally the policy of holding the conference in a different town each year originated in the wish to carry the conference to the farmer. It may well be that we could revert to fixed localities, one in the North and one in the South.

The move from under the wing of the Agricultural Colleges occurred after the Sixth Conference and coincided with the appointment of Mr L. J. Matthews as secretary and our adoption by the Department of Agriculture. Members were also invited to submit papers for presentation in addition to those given by speakers on topics specified by the committee. The Seventh Conference saw the introduction of the prize for the best presented paper, a feature that has contributed greatly to the standard of our conference. To facilitate judging, the 20 minutes' paper followed by 20 minutes' discussion was introduced but the resulting form of conference, admirable as it was, only allowed for the presentation of about 18 papers. Last year the committee was embarrassed by the offer of a number of papers in excess of this, so at the suggestion of Messrs Matthews and Ferens, who have attended similar functions overseas, it was decided this year to accept all suitable papers and group those with some affinity under discussion leaders. This has meant an extra effort by authors and our secretary to ensure that you could read the papers beforehand, a necessity if we are to derive full benefit from attendance. The success of the meeting now depends on the cooperation of the audience and the ability of the discussion leader in addition to the efforts of the authors. Whatever the outcome we still have the gain

of early access in the "Proceedings" to the work of a greater number of people than was previously possible. We also hope that it will speed the process of assimilation into farming practice by recording members' opinions of the place of the work reported in the country's weed control pattern—a step in the direction of Recommendations of the Weed Conference which have often been mooted but never effected. Ideally this form of conference will give perfect expression to the objects of the society: "to pool and exchange information concerning weeds and methods of weed control".

On the financial side, as the annual report shows, our funds have been increasing steadily despite the reduction in membership fees a few years back. Our thanks for this state of affairs are due to our authors, our editor, our secretary, and to the changeover from cyclostyling to printing our "Proceedings". Our concern must be the best way to use these funds to further our aims. So far two possibilities have been considered. Firstly to help to attract agricultural students to the weed control profession, especially to the research side where many applied and fundamental problems await critical attention. The Weed Control Conference award of £25 to be given in alternate years to Massey College and Canterbury Agricultural College is a step in this direction, the first award being paid to Massey College last year. The second possibility is that this conference sponsor a programme aimed ultimately at the publication of an illustrated Weed Flora of New Zealand. Preparation of demonstration collections of coloured and black and white 35 mm transparencies for identification purposes would be a first step in this project. Most of the work would devolve on Mr Healy and his associates, but a subcommittee of this conference could assist in preparing an overall plan and provide the driving force to get a worthwhile, from our point of view, project completed as soon as possible.

Finance could be made available by the N.Z. W.C.C. to assist with materials and possibly facilities and at a later stage to assist in financing publication. Publications such as this together with sale of reprints as already envisaged by your executive could yield additional income and lead to increased awards or provide subsidies for research and travel. An innovation this year was the holding of a two-day summer school at Hamilton. The winter field days held in conjunction with the conference are necessarily limited by the season and members have often expressed the wish that the conference could be held occasionally at a more favourable time for observing field work. Thanks to Mr F. B. Thompson, the Superintendent of Rukuhia, and a vigorous local committee, the meeting, which included lectures and inspection of trial plots, was most successful. It is proposed to hold a further summer meeting at Hamilton in the coming summer and also if possible at Invermay. Since these meetings are of more local interest, it may be possible to organise them in several localities during the year when a suitable concentration of trial work is offering.

Another matter which has been raised from time to time regarding the form of our conference is the question of the inclusion of papers on insecticides and fungicides. Many members are interested in the control of pests in the widest sense, but it has been the opinion of the executive that time would not permit the introduction of more papers in the programme than were already offering on weed control topics. Now, however, the need for plant pest and fungicide problems to receive the same intensive treatment accorded to weeds is pressing to say the least and this conference has been asked, because of its experience, because of the commonness of interest to members and for reasons of economy, to reconsider the possibility of including papers on pest problems other than weeds. We must give the matter our careful attention. Undoubtedly the length of conference would have to be extended. This is now more acceptable in view of changes outlined earlier. Namely we do not need to shift about the country to reach farmer audiences and the introduction of summer field days makes it possible to consider dropping the winter field day. By holding the meetings handy to main trunk rail and air routes a four- or even five-day conference would not be impossible from the travel point of view, and without reducing the time for weed papers, we could devote one and a half or two and a half days to virus, insect, and fungus problems of crop and pasture plants. But we must be careful to maintain our identity as a Weed Control Conference, as indeed our Rules require.

From these remarks I think you will agree we have now reached the point when our interests and influence can spread beyond the bounds of an annual conference and assist in many ways the growth of the body of information relating to vegetation control. Because of this and the many weed problems awaiting solution I believe our conference can look forward to many years of service to the profession of weed control and the prop to prosperity—increasing production from the soil.

—F. C. Allen