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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

M.J. HARTLEY

As I end my service as President of this Society perhaps I may be forgiven for a nostalgic reflection on the past 18 years since I was elected Secretary in 1971.

That was at my first Weed and Pest Conference during my first year in New Zealand and I was assured it was not a big job. Little did I know what I was in for! However, as with most jobs of that nature, the more you put into it the more you get out of it and for me those early years as secretary of this Society were most rewarding. To start with, it gave me a chance to meet and get to know many people in New Zealand far more quickly than I would have otherwise done.

I believe the Society has grown in stature and standing over those 18 years and I am conceited enough to believe I have contributed to that growth. My major contribution has probably been to raise the editorial standards of our Proceedings.

In 1973 the Society introduced an internal referring system and handled its own editing and, with experience, the standards of both have improved. Our Proceedings is now a standard reference for weed, pest and disease information in New Zealand and the envy of several other societies that do not have an available outlet for their members' work. Most first time visitors to our conference are surprised at the professional standard of our Proceedings and that we can produce it annually.

The Society also had other publications for which I can take no credit. We have reprinted our two reference books, 'Identification of Weeds and Clover' and 'Standard Common Names for Weeds in New Zealand' neither of which have been great financial successes but both are very useful books. However, our most successful publication has been 'New Zealand Common Weeds in Colour'. This has proved a 'best seller' and is almost solely responsible for the current financial wellbeing of the Society for which we are deeply indebted to Alan Upritchard. We hope in the future to produce similar books on insects and plant diseases, and to revise N.Z. Common Weeds.

Over all those years, however, the format of our conference has changed little and that is to the credit of the Society's early administrators for devising a very effective formula for conference organisation — a formula that has stood the test of time.

Success is self generating. We have been fortunate to reach that critical mass stage where many people come to the 'Weed and Pest' because they know other people will be there whom they wish to meet. It is essential that we maintain this critical mass because if it breaks down the result could be catastrophic.

The advent of user-pays has also had an impact on our conference. Whereas we used to be a meeting ground for pure scientific interchange, and hopefully still are, we are now copying big brother — the British Crop Protection Council Conference — and becoming a meeting ground for commercial purposes between research organisations and commercial companies — a situation I personally don't like but if it serves our members needs and maintains the viability of our Society so be it. I believe we should still concentrate our efforts on our main objective of exchanging information on weeds, pests and diseases and their control.

The big change ahead in this area is going to be the so called 'green' movement. In the past, because our Society was born near the birth of the agricultural pesticide industry it has been heavily involved in chemical control of weed, pest and disease problems — and done it very well. Now, though agricultural chemicals still do a very good, efficient and, with care, safe job, and are essential to assist feeding the vast and ever growing world population, we are going to have to look at alternatives to meet the demands of the affluent parts of the world.

The ethics of whether we should produce high cost food for an over-fed, wealthy section of the community, or help to feed the masses who cannot afford such luxury, is a decision way beyond the scope of this Society. We, as scientists, have to generate the 'know how' to control weeds, pests and diseases by whatever means is required. So now, having been at the forefront of the dissemination of information on the efficacy of chemical pest control methods, we will have to divert our attention to non-chemical methods, or techniques to reduce chemical use.

Many of our members are already moving in this direction and I see our Society moving further that way in the future. However, I appeal to you to keep a sense of proportion, don't lose your heads jumping on the current bandwagon. Reduce agricultural chemical use by all means, but don't forget the great job these chemicals have done and still do. Just stop and think what chemicals have done to give us the freedom from pests we now take for granted. Look at the much maligned DDT. This chemical has saved millions of lives by controlling the malarial mosquito but has it actually killed anyone? It has probably done more harm to the world through its success than through its toxins; had DDT not saved so many lives, in places where people were conditioned to breeding replacement people, the world would not be so over populated now.

So as I hand the affairs of this Society over to my successors I thank all who have supported me over the past years as Secretary and as President, and wish the society prosperity in the changing years to come.

ANNUAL REPORT 1989-90

A.J. Popay

The 42nd annual conference was held in Taranaki with a good attendance. The large number of papers presented continues to reflect the importance of this forum for the dissemination of information on weeds, pests and diseases in New Zealand.

Disappointingly, however, the Society is facing a decline in membership which has continued over the last 4 years. This undoubtedly reflects the current scientific climate in New Zealand with the disaffection of many science and industry personnel. The decline in membership has inevitably had an effect on the Society's finances. As a result sustaining members have again been approached for their support for the first time in 3 years. Their contributions assist the Society's operating costs considerably and are gratefully acknowledged.

The Society this year lost a valuable committee member when the Vice-President, Colin Sharpe, transferred to a new position in Australia. Colin has served the Society very well over several years. The Society also notes with regret the death of a life member, Alan Meeklah, whose obituary appears in this Proceedings.

Due to the steady demand for "New Zealand Common Weeds in Colour" a further 5000 copies of the present edition were printed this year. A second edition is in the early planning stages.

Although the focal point of the Society is its annual conference two local branches remain active. Both Hawkes Bay and Waikato hold meetings, seminars, displays etc. for their members occasionally during the year.

NEW ZEALAND WEED AND PEST CONTROL RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP

The Scholarship for the 1989/90 year was awarded to Mark Braithwaite. When the scholarship was awarded, Mark was completing an M.Sc degree at Lincoln University whilst working part time at MAF. His thesis was on fairy ring spot disease of carnations. He has now completed the formal requirements for his masters degree and the scholarship will be used to extend the results of his research to commercial growing conditions and to assist in the publication of results. Mark has recently taken up full time employment with MAF at Lincoln as a scientist.

