

TRAINING JUDGES

The committee of the National Conference and Show feels that the time has come when there should be more attention paid to the recruitment and "training" of its judges. This is no reflection upon those who have judged hitherto, but the committee is anxious to have some recognised system, whereby judges can be recruited, so that a "judges panel" can be created from which the judges in anyone year can be selected. Undoubtedly many more "recognised" judges are needed than we have available at the moment, but "recognition" implies a common judging practice and standard. The committee also wants, therefore, to devise judging methods which will be generally accepted, and which will lead in time to the possibility of advanced training, and even an examination, for judges, with the possibility for those who qualify of belonging to, say, a Guild of Wine Judges. The National committee has appointed a sub-committee (which has already had its first meeting) to examine all the implications of this problem, which is a really thorny one. It is obvious that one has to start right at the beginning by devising rules and procedures for judges, which can be embodied in some form of handbook, and this is the first task the sub-committee has set itself. Even this entails many problems, for present practice is not wholly satisfactory. It is felt, for instance that most of the present systems of marking attach far too little weight to taste and texture, and far too much importance to bottling and clarity. (This was important in the early days of our hobby, when we were endeavouring to do away with the squash bottle and sauce bottle approach but is perhaps less so now!). There is, perhaps, also an undue penalisation of slight deposit, particularly in the red wine classes, and of "floaters." It is felt that, whilst (in some cases) these might be faults, some judges deduct far too many marks for them, and that the marking scale should be revised accordingly. And should judges use hydrometers or "chemistry outfits?" And what about the old problems of "sweet or dry?" Readers' views would be welcome on these or any other judging problems, on all of which the committee will have eventually to give a ruling, and what is more a ruling which is clearly correct and generally acceptable, for the common benefit of all of us.