

The Amateur Winemaker

January 1964

From the Editor's Chair

HOW MANY WINEMAKERS?

How many home winemakers are there in this country? This is a question which is always cropping up, and I have as yet to see a convincing answer. I have seen many wild guesses, but cannot for the life of me see how they can be anything more than guesses, for there are no reliable statistics available. Yet the question is always being asked, usually by newspapermen or authors of magazine articles who want a single startling fact upon which to hang their article. We are always being asked it, and sometimes the inquirers become quite irritated when we are unreasonable enough not to be prepared to give a firm answer to an unanswerable question! Just before writing this, for instance, we have had inquiries from the "Daily Express," from a newspaperman in Manchester, and from two TV producers, all of whom were busy instructing their readers or viewers how to brew beer for Christmas. How many home brewers were there in the country? How many winemakers were there in England? All that one can say is that there are now about 180 known clubs, and that their average membership is probably about 50. Even this gives the formidable figure of 9,000 "organised" winemakers, but it is a fairly safe assumption that for every single winemaker who is a member of a club there are 10 who are not (and that is on the low side) giving one, at a conservative estimate, nearly 100,000 winemakers. This, we suspect, errs very much on the low side, but how can one be sure? Home brewers are fewer, for we would think that for every 10 who make wine there is only one who brews beer, but again, who really knows?

DANGEROUS!

Incidentally, for one who is a newspaperman himself, it is a chastening experience to see the printed result of some of these hurried and obviously ill-digested telephone interviews, so much so that one becomes wary of giving them. In two recent reports the name of this magazine has been given wrongly, even after it had been spelt out to the reporter, and some of the recipes for which we have been asked have been so garbled in print as to be completely unrecognisable, and we only hope that readers who have seen them and who know us, have not laid the blame at our door! One, for instance, had us advising people " ... never to bottle beer below a specific gravity of 1010 or it may be too lively." instead of exactly the reverse. We had advocated NEVER bottling above 1010 for that reason, and we only hope that that newspaper's readers did not blow themselves up ...

NEW CLASSES

Talking of beer, many home brewers will welcome the news that at this year's National Conference Show (Bournemouth, 16 and 17 April) there will for the first time be classes for home-brew, thanks to the 1963 Budget, which made home brewing legal without a licence. There is a class for pale ale, one for bitter, and one for brown ale, and Mr. Wilf Newsome is giving a new trophy. It has been decided by the committee, by the way, that all beers will be shown in I-pint brown beer bottles with screw stoppers, and that for reasons of safety and freedom from sediment all beer must have been rebottled just before being shown.

FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Other new classes are: one for three colour transparencies connected with winemaking, and one for a black and white photographic print (up to 8in. x 8in.) taken at any previous National Conference. These should see some good entries. There is also a display class for winemakers on a space 2ft. by 2ft., which can include finished wines, equipment, ingredients, etc. In the cookery classes for the first time is one for wines and snacks to entertain a party of four, and in this fancy containers will be allowed. Yet one more innovation is a Circle championship class in which Circles will be able to enter the best single bottle of dry white wine that can be produced from their whole membership. This should provoke some keen competition within Circles in the months ahead!

PLEA

to all Circles. Please help us make the tombola at the Show a great success by sending at least one worthwhile prize from your Circle to: Dr. R. A. Webb, Carr End, Chestnut Avenue, Long Ashton, Bristol.

AND THEN CLACTON

Whilst on the subject, now is perhaps the time to mention that the 1965 Conference will be held at Butlin's, Clacton, during the first week-end after Easter. We on the National Committee are sure that this announcement will be greeted with enthusiasm, for Butlin's can offer us absolutely everything we need in the way of facilities—a hall for the wine show, lecture rooms and theatres, bars, dancing, a Conference banquet, entertainments, comfortable accommodation, and wonderful organisational assistance, all at a rockbottom price, since it will be out of season. The whole week-end, from Friday night until after lunch on Sunday, will cost only about £6 per head, including the return fare from London (children half-price). The Conference will take over a portion of the camp completely and be entirely self-contained and it should be emphasised that Butlin's only do the weekend at this knockout price for us solely to advertise the wonderful facilities that they can offer to their summer visitors. Their advertising is 'Our gain! If you have never been inside such a holiday camp, this will be your chance to do so for a week-end inexpensively. Obviously we shall have to guarantee a large block booking—we hope for 500—but this should not be difficult, particularly since booking forms will be available at the Bournemouth Conference this year, so that you will all be able to make your reservations a year ahead on payment of a very small deposit.