

AMATEUR WINEMAKER NOVEMBER 1964

From the Editor's notebook

ARE WE REALLY A "MOVEMENT" ?

We often talk and write of the "winemaking movement," but until now there has been no organised such movement, and the only real link between the nearly 200 Circles has been this magazine. We have been only too glad to act in this capacity, and to undertake the large amount of correspondence necessary to launch new clubs, advise on judging and show procedures, to supply addresses, to act as the official organ of the National Conference, and carry out many such functions that are not strictly the role of a periodical such as ours. Someone had to do them if winemaking was to flourish.

Someone, too, had to maintain a list of all known Circles, and we have done our best to do this, though it is difficult, since officers are constantly changing and not all Circles have contact with the magazine or Conference.

ENORMOUS GROWTH

Now that the number of clubs has grown so enormously, there is clearly a need for more organisation and for firmer ties between them, and that is why I was particularly happy to be able to propose a resolution at the annual meeting of the National Conference and Show which will not only provide a means for allowing Circles to have some definite system of affiliation, but will allow individuals to become members also. The annual meeting, in its wisdom, passed it by an overwhelming majority.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED!

This means, in effect, that we have virtually created a national organisation of winemakers. Some years ago, at Bournemouth, the National Conference voted overwhelmingly *against* forming a national organisation, but that was largely because, in those early days of the movement (there we go again 1) most of us were chary of attracting too much attention to our newly formed Circles, lest we attracted unwelcome legislation also. Now, however, it is probably true to say that the situation has changed, and for the better. We can take credit, all of us, for the fact that, instead of being regarded as a peculiar, faintly comic, pastime, winemaking has now become commonplace, an accepted part of the social scene. Winemakers are no longer regarded as oddities, or our hobby as unusual; and the growth in the popularity of commercial wines has brought to many the realisation that perhaps these winemakers "have something," and do know what they are talking about, after all! As winemaking has become more popular, fears of legislative interference have abated, and it does seem that the time is ripe for a strengthening of our national organisation. Now, as the result of the A.G.M. resolution, Circles can pay an annual subscription of £2/2/- and affiliate to the National Conference, individual winemakers can pay £1/1/-, and in both cases certain rights and privileges will be secured. This does mean that a definite national membership list of both Circles and individuals will be established, and to our mind this can only be to the good, for it will make it possible for Circles to keep in closer contact with one another, for a true national organisation to be gradually created, and for individual winemakers who have no Circle in their area to be helped and brought within the fold."

A.G.M. EXTENDS SHOW MEMBERSHIP TO INDIVIDUALS

FOR THE first time this year the annual general meeting of the Amateur Winemakers' National Conference and Show was held separately from the Show itself, in London on Sunday, 11 October, having been postponed until the autumn for the purpose. This had several advantages, that it allowed more time for other things at the show, that more time could be devoted to the meeting, and that it allowed time for resolutions to be circulated to club's in advance for discussion.

The idea was generally approved, as evidenced by the fact that a resolution proposed by the Enfield & District Circle thru "the A.G.M. be held at the same time as the annual conference" was last by an overwhelming majority.

Circles represented were: Andover, Birmingham, Bishop's Cleeve, Bournemouth, Bristol, Croydon, Dunstable, East Barnet, Epsom Dawns, Farnborough, Gospart, Greenhill (Harrow), Harrow, Hesa (Hayes), Hertford, Luton, King's Lynn, Marconi, Portsmouth, Reading, Southampton, Southend, South Essex, Tally Ho (Barnet), Taunton, Twickenham, Wales, West Kent, Wood Green and York. Apologies were received from Liverpool, Malden and Coombe, Merseyside, Nottingham and Southdown.

The chairman, Mr. C. J. J. Berry, welcomed the delegates.

The general secretary, Mr. B. C. A. Turner, reported that in the working year under review it had become clear that the Conference and Show had grown so much that the duties of the officers must be reorganized and that more members must be co-opted to the committee. This had been done, and the enlarged committee had worked amicably and conscientiously, most members making 100 per cent. attendance at its six meetings.

The most important decision taken was the creation of the Amateur Winemakers' National Guild of Judges (if the committee had not set up such an organization it was certain that a private group would have done so). The Guild in its first year had produced a wonderful handbook for the guidance of exhibitors, show organizers and judges (this would be published within the next few weeks) and the secretary believed that this would pay dividends to the movement.

Every Circle in the country (then about 170) had been sent the chairman's letter in December, 1963, telling them of the decision to delay the annual meeting until now, and asking for resolutions. Early in June the agendas had gone out.

Although the Bournemouth Conference was not quite so large as Brighton the previous year, entries were of high standard and the number of exhibitors increased, a healthy thing. The Conference had few faults and some very worthwhile innovations, notably "Judges at the Bar." Most people appeared well satisfied with the arrangements. The Show now had its own display stands, generously constructed by Mr. R. C. Lucas.

Finally, Mr. Turner submitted his own resignation and that of Mr. C. Austin from the committee because of pressing commitments in other spheres, and the chairman, accepting these with regret, warmly thanked Mr. Turner for the invaluable service he had rendered the conference, especially as general secretary.

A full discussion ensued concerning the formation of the Guild of Judges and the handbook shortly to be published, and the Guild chairman, Mr. S. W. Andrews (also vice-chairman of the Conference) was able to clarify many points. He urged delegates to wait just a little longer until the handbook was available. Once they had read it all of what the Guild had been doing for the past year would become clear and they would appreciate what an important contribution the Guild committee had made to the growth and efficiency of the winemaking movement.

Mr. Ivor Morgan, the treasurer, reported that at the moment there was a balance on deposit and of cash in hand of £551/15/1, of which £59 was in advance bookings for Clacton. It was agreed that in future the accounts should be prepared to show both a profit and loss account and a property account, and the committee were asked to consider the writing down of the Conference assets and the investment of the money on deposit.

Mr. Baker, of the Amateur Winemaking Society of Wales, moved the first resolution, "that the rules for exhibitions be amended to include half-size battles as well as 26oz. bottles," but after a lively debate in which all the pros. and cons. were set out by various speakers, the motion was heavily defeated.

The chairman submitted on behalf of the committee the resolution that "membership of the Conference be extended to include individuals as well as societies. The annual subscription for an individual to be £1/1/- per year, with no double (husband and wife) membership, and the subscription for Circles to be £2/2/- per year). He explained that this resolution was necessary because of the unexpectedly rapid growth of their Show, and its financial success. They had in the very early days invited subscriptions from societies, but because they had always budgeted within that small income and had each year made a financial success of the conference they had not liked to go back to the clubs with a further appeal. As a result, they had always tended to run the Conference and Show "on a shoestring," and there was no adequate, predictable income to allow for satisfactory or elaborate organisation. They wanted to end this, and to set up an efficient, viable administration. The sub-committee which had examined the problem had come up with this recommendation, which would put their Conference and Show on a par with the National Honey Show and similar institutions, and would make them a truly national organisation.

Various rights and privileges were proposed for members, and it soon became evident during the discussion that whilst the meeting approved of the idea in principle, it was on the whole against the idea of individual members having one vote (as against a Circle's two) it being feared that clubs might thus lose control of the Show they had created. Finally, each point in the proposed privileges was voted upon, and the meeting then passed the resolution.

Individuals paying £1/1/- subscription will be entitled to:

1. Free admission to Conference.
2. Exclusive classes in the show at reduced fees.
3. A distinctive badge,
4. Copy of programme and schedule as soon as published.
5. Priority for admission tickets to any activity organised by the Conference.
6. Full information from time to time about Conference and Show matters, including minutes and accounts of the A,G,M.

Affiliated Circles paying £2/2/- membership will be entitled to:

1. Two free tickets for the Conference and Show.
2. One delegate to the annual general meeting with full voting rights.
3. The advice of the Conference Committee on all matters relating to the making of wines and beers, the organisation of a Circle, and the organisation of a local or regional show.
4. Items 4, 5 and 6 as listed for individuals.

On the proposition of the general secretary, the size of the committee as laid down in the constitution, was increased from nine to 15, and the committee were empowered to co-opt such additional members as might be necessary from time to time, The revised constitution is to be circulated as soon as possible.

Nine nominations were received for nine vacancies on the committee, so an election proved unexpectedly unnecessary. The committee now is: Messrs. Berry, Morgan and Webb (each another two years to serve), Messrs. Andrews, Gilbertson and Martin (one year to serve), and Messrs. F. Bastin, Harrow, B. Brown, Reading, B. Lucas, Abingdon, R. C. Lucas and Mrs. Lucas, Bournemouth, E. Malin, Bishop's Cleeve, J. Mann, Harrow, W. Millett, Chelmsford and R. Woodley, Andover.

Finally, the meeting discussed the venue for the 1966 conference. Possibilities; Harrogate (Mr. Francis of York was co-opted for service as required), Bristol (inquiries are to be made), with Brighton and Alexandra Palace, London, as safeguards.

In all, the three-hour A.G.M. was most constructive, producing many sound and helpful suggestions which will be of the greatest help to the committee in the year ahead.