

# Judges dealt with 60,000 bottles

Out of 19 candidates who took the examinations of the Amateur Winemakers National Guild of Judges during the past two months, five have passed and have been admitted to membership of the A.W.N.G.J. They are:—*Wine*, Dr. M. Leadley; Notts. Mrs. P. Leadley - Notts; Mrs. G. Jackson - Coulsdon; *Beer*, Mr. R. J. Down - Torquay and Mr. A. W. Garten - Southampton.

## JUDGING ACTIVITIES

People sometimes ask what contribution is made to the home wine-making movement by members of the A.W.N.G.J. The returns of 55 members on their judging activities during 1971 have been analysed. The total includes six beer judges, of whom three were Wine judges. The number represents just under half of the total members of the guild.

The 52 wine judges undertook altogether 754 engagements, judging 1,257 classes of wine with a total of 23,948 bottles. The average number of bottles in each class was comparatively low (19), but several members coped with classes of more than 70 bottles, and the record appears to go to the judge with 89 in one class.

The six beer judges had in all 52 engagements (89 classes and a total of 1,069 bottles). Therefore the 55 wine and beer judges between them judged over 25,000 bottles of wine. An average of about 500 each. The total number of active judges in the Guild is about 120, so it is fair to assume that during 1971, all members of the Guild, between them, will have undertaken the judging of about 60,000 bottles, a truly enormous task and one which gives some idea of the value, and the contribution of the Amateur Winemakers National Guild of Judges to the movement as a whole.

# N.A.A.W. BOMBSHELL:

## Chairman resigns over Co-option

**Shock news this month: Dr. R. A. Webb, the Chairman and longest-serving member of the committee of the National Association of Amateur Wine-makers has resigned—on a matter of principle.**

The *A.W.* understands that he feels quite unable to accept the way in which the Committee filled two vacancies in their ranks, as a result of which a previously nominated candidate was excluded, but two of their own nominees were appointed.

Dr. Webb has set out his reasons in a letter to Mr. B. C. A. Turner, the Association's President, as follows:

Dear Ben,

A situation has arisen which has compelled me to resign from the chair and the committee of our Association. I think it my duty to report the matter as it affected me, and am sure you will receive an independent official report. The matter concerns the number of members of the committee, and the method of appointing them.

It was brought to the notice of the committee after the Hull A.G.M. that we were one short of the number called for by the Constitution, 15 elected members, and a decision to take no action was made. It was again brought to the committee's notice *before* the Eastbourne A.G.M. but *after* the Secretary had circulated the Agenda, that the number to be elected should be 6, not 5 as called for in the Agenda. The committee decided to advise the A.G.M. in session that 6 should be elected. At the Judges Briefing an announcement of an additional resignation was made by a member of the committee. A quorum of committee, hastily convened to decide whether or not a ballot was necessary, there being now 7 'vacancies'

and 7 nominations, decided to adhere to the letter of the A.G.M. Agenda, rescinded its decision to ask for 6 to be elected and reverted to 5. A ballot took place on this basis.

Doubts having been raised in my mind about the ethics of the committee's action, I wrote to Fred Forster for his interpretation of the Constitution in the hope of finding a guideline to a course of action enabling the committee to resolve its numbers problem unambiguously and incontrovertibly. It was apparent that he did not think the Constitution was written tightly enough to define the necessary course of action. I had therefore to fall back on what I believe to be the spirit of the Constitution, in which the committee is a body of 15 members created at the A.G.M. (a ballot has not always been necessary), plus others co-opted when need arises.

At its first meeting after the Eastbourne A.G.M., yesterday in Birmingham, the committee was informed officially of the resignation announced at Eastbourne, and was faced with the need to add two to its number. How this should be done was discussed at some length. With others, I pointed out that we had been in error at Hull, and again at Eastbourne, in failing to call for the election of 6 to the committee. By chance, at the top of the list of 'unsuccessful' candidates in each ballot was the same name, making it possible for the committee to remedy a situation which would not have arisen had it not failed to observe the constitutional requirements, since the same person would have been elected in either ballot. After discussion the committee decided, without opposition, but not, I think, unanimously, to co-opt two members of its own choice, unconditionally.

This course of action was quite unacceptable to me personally, and after accepting the decision as Chairman I felt obliged to dissociate from it personally in the only possible way and resigned from the chair and the committee. In my view, to accept the committee's course of action for regulating its numbers leaves it open to a committee to call for the election of reduced numbers at the A.G.M., whether by accident or design, subsequently to augment its numbers with candidates of its own choice, or who may have privately sought co-option. In my view it is not sufficient for members of the National Committee to act impartially and in good faith—it has to be apparent that they are not acting otherwise. The defence proposed, that the error had not been detected or could have been rectified at an A.G.M. if members had demanded this, seems to be irrelevant since the committee did not take the necessary steps when one of its members pointed out the error.

My decision to resign was not made on the spur of the moment. I have given the matter much thought since Eastbourne and went into the meeting hoping that the committee would decide on a course of action which would be acceptable to me, and I think to most of our members in rectifying its omission. I realise that resignation is a serious step, perhaps with unexpected consequences, but I am satisfied that I have done the right thing, for the right reasons, and hope that future events do not disprove this.

Yours sincerely,

R. A. Webb