

FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

"NATIONAL" BOMBSHELL

This year's National Conference and Show, which was to have been the seventeenth, is off, cancelled. This was the bombshell which hit winemakers the first weekend in February. Only the previous week individual members of the National Association, club secretaries and regular exhibitors had received their schedules and advanced information about the Conference, which was to have been held at Butlin's Holiday Camp at Bognor Regis, Sussex at the end of April, and it was undoubtedly the reaction to this which caused the cancellation. Nub of the matter was cost: double chalets were to cost individual members £18.15 per person for the two nights, single chalets £19.50, and non-members £20.70 and £22.30 per person for doubles and singles respectively. Of this £2 per person was a surcharge which *might* have been refunded. But the inescapable fact was that the weekend was going to cost a couple somewhere between £36.30 and £41.40, plus their travelling (£5-£10?) and incidental expenses, in all, a dear weekend for what was being offered. This was the instant and general reaction of those who received the details and as a result the committee had an urgent meeting at Coventry on Sunday, 2nd February, at which the decision to cancel was taken. It was telephoned to the Association of Federations, which happened to be meeting in Birmingham.

HOW IT HAPPENED

How did this situation arise? Apparently when first approached last year Butlins could not quote a firm price for the weekend owing to the difficulty of forecasting costs so far ahead, but they nonetheless required a reservation if the camp was to be

opened that weekend for the wine-makers. So a booking was made but it was not until mid-November that a firm price was received from Butlins. By then arrangements were in hand, so the committee decided to go ahead as planned, and the schedules were printed and, in January, distributed. The reaction of Circles and individual members, however, to the price and the fact that the Conference obviously could not possibly hope to draw the sort of attendance that was essential, prompted some urgent second thoughts. Efforts were made in the limited amount of time available to find an alternative venue, but these were unsuccessful, and the committee found itself faced with the dilemma of whether to risk going ahead and have a flop, or cancel. They decided to cancel, and an advertisement on page 108 gives their side of the story.

WHY?

Inevitably, there will be some hard questions asked, in particular as to why the Executive was so unbusiness-like as to allow a situation to develop where a firm booking was made and an event organised *before* firm basic costings had been done. Everyone who regularly supports and enjoys the National will be disappointed that it should come unstuck in such inglorious a fashion.



National Association of Wine and Beer Makers (Amateur)

At a National Executive meeting of NAWB, held on Sunday, 2nd Feb., 1975, the following proposition was put to the meeting and passed unanimously. "That in view of the risk of loss of goodwill and finance to the NAWB, as a result of countrywide indications of lack of support by members due to the high charges levied by Butlins,—with regret the 1975 Conference and Show now be cancelled. The AGM to be rearranged."

Members naturally will wish to know all the events which led to this decision.

Having regard to the wishes of a large number of members for a "cheap family holiday week-end" at a holiday camp once in 3 or 4 years, it was decided to investigate the possibilities this year with Butlins. Following is a chronological sequence of events:—

27 Nov., 1973. Accommodation reserved.

8 Jan., 1974. Reply from Butlins. Impossible to give tariffs so early.

29 July, 1974 to 4 Nov., 1974 inclusive. Three letters and two telephone calls to Butlins requesting tariffs. In each case their reply was that their costing exercise had not been carried out.

15 Nov., 1974. Tariffs received from Butlins.

17 Nov., 1974. Letter to Butlins expressing dismay at the price, and asking for reconsideration.

21 Nov., 1974. Letter from Butlins regretting our feelings, but insisting their costings were correct.

Nov., 1974. Eight further possible venues contacted. Some couldn't take us at all. Others could give us part requirements only. Letters and a questionnaire were sent to each committee member, and the decision to continue was taken according to the following replies:

1—Voted to cancel altogether.

14—No alternative but to remain at Butlins, with the hope that most of the members would think the tariff not too excessive in these days of escalating costs.

14 Dec., 1974. Instructions issued for all necessary printing to continue. Unfortunately because of Christmas pressures and holiday at the printers the information could not be sent to members and others as soon as we could have wished.

14 Dec., 1974. Letter to Butlins confirming booking.

2 Feb., 1975. Executive Committee meeting held, when letters received by committee members were read, and telephone messages reported. It was obvious that we were losing a lot of goodwill, would be financially embarrassed if we pressed ahead, and further problems could be expected at the Show, should members decide to stay outside the camp. We hope sincerely that members will understand the reasons for the committee's decision.

Doubtless many members will be eager to ask questions, so please do your best to attend the A.G.M. and give your committee the opportunity of replying.

So that travelling can be kept to a minimum, the A.G.M. will be held in Birmingham on Saturday, April 26th 1975, commencing promptly at 2.00 p.m. The address is:—

Birmingham Centre Hotel, New St., Birmingham B2 4RX, and is immediately outside New St. Railway Station. Meals are available at the hotel should you require them, and overnight accommodation has been agreed at the conference rate of £4.50 per single room and £7.00 per double room, VAT extra. Should you require this accommodation it is essential to book in advance, mentioning you are a member of NAWB to obtain these concessionary rates.

(Signed).

The National Executive Committee of NAWB.

4th February, 1975.

BENEFITS OF ASSOCIATION NOW BEING FELT

Opening the second A.G.M. of the Association of Winemakers Federations at the Wheatsheaf Hotel, Sheldon, in Birmingham, Chairman, Mr. R. E. Budge remarked how happy he was that the association was now becoming more accepted as an organisation formed to assist the other federations, the Guild of Judges and National Association, rather than to work in opposition to them. Emphasising the benefits to be gained by joining the Association, it was agreed that more publicity was required in the form of news letters and liaison officers to spread the message to wine circles within federations who were as yet not members of the Association.

Representatives were present from: N.W. Kent, Herts., North Midlands, East Midlands, Beds. and Herts., Essex, Middlesex, Wales and West, North West Federation, Midlands from the thirteen members who now form the Association, although secretary Jack Parkin mentioned that there were many more circles who were "teetering on the brink" of joining or forming a federation.

The election of this year's officers followed. John Toule (Wales and West) former P.R.O., was elected chairman with Gordon Chambers (Midlands) the new vice-chairman. Jack Parkin agreed to stand again as secretary; likewise Roy Ekins (N. West Federation) agreed to carry on as treasurer.

Committee members are Ken Bilham (23/25) and Peter Bradley. It was at this point in the meeting that news was received that the National Conference and Show had been cancelled.