



WHERE SHOULD IT BE?

The Scarborough Conference has come and gone and no doubt the Executive are already turning their thoughts to next year's efforts. It is fully reported in this issue and there is no need to add to that other than to offer them our own congratulations on what proved to be a most enjoyable, friendly and smooth-running weekend. And if a thing is smooth-running it points only to sound planning and some hard work behind the scenes! This year we heard nothing but praise for the arrangements and programme from those attending, and the only grumbles we have heard were from those in the deep south, many of them "regulars" of long standing who this year for the first time could not attend because the conference was held in the far north; that in itself is no bar, of course, but greatly increased cost of travel is! It is, as we said in our April issue, a great shame when winemakers are prevented from attending solely by expense, and the Executive is obviously keenly aware of this, because Les Stagg, the chairman, devoted the major part of his report at the A.G.M. to this topic, explaining some of the difficulties. He pointed out that in these days of tight municipal purse-strings "Conference" towns were no longer competing to attract conferences such as theirs with all sort of free facilities, and there were not many other venues which could offer suitable accommodation. Even holiday camps were becoming more expensive and there were not all that many Universities which could take them.

CENTRAL?

All this, of course, is undeniable, but we did not so readily follow the argument that the Conference must

still be peripatetic and move North, East, South, West. If it has to be, certainly by 1979 the South or West will be due for a turn (1974 Margate, 1975 cancelled, 1976 Nottingham, 1977 Scarborough, 1978 Nottingham). But, in view of the cost of travelling, surely it would be better consistently to plump for a reasonably central location, so that the majority can afford to get to it, rather than make it too expensive for the Northerners one year and too expensive for the Southerners the next? This was the point we raised in our April issue, and we think, now that Conference towns are no longer the obvious answer, that efforts should be concentrated on finding venues as near central for the whole country as possible.

MEMBERSHIP

As was mentioned during the A.G.M., membership is definitely affected by the location of the annual show; people tend only to join the Association if the Conference is within reasonable travelling distance of their home and they can therefore attend and enjoy the financial benefit of membership. Thus membership can fluctuate greatly. This points, one can fairly argue, to the fact that, as we have argued before, we are perhaps on the wrong track as regards membership, and that our present difficulties over it stem largely from undue emphasis in the past on individual membership. What would be better, we still consider, is membership *through* a club, and *through* a Federation. An individual would be a member of a club, a club would be a member of a Federation, and a Federation would be a member of the National Association, and all finance would be arranged on a simple

capitation basis. Thus the National secretary would have to correspond only with the Federations' secretaries and information would be passed both "upwards" and "downwards" between them; similarly the Federations would deal with their own clubs, and the clubs would deal with their own members. In this way the National would obviate dealing with a vast list of individual members, a job which, as we predicted three or four years ago, is becoming steadily more expensive and impossible, as other debates at the A.G.M. indicated. Already the membership financial structure has had to be simplified and already the Executive is pointing to the cost of circularising all these individual members. Yet, if there was a capitation fee of, say, 10p for every member of a Wine-making Circle (perhaps 5p for the Federation and 5p for the National), financial problems and organisational problems would disappear overnight because there would be ample finance and a ready-made, three-tier "chain of command". Many other national organisations find this type of set-up workable and it might still be well worth while having a fresh look at the idea, it seems to us.