

NEWS AND VIEWS OCCASIONAL

NOVEMBER 1974

Dear Friends,

Without knowing all of you personally, I still feel encouraged to address all our members - indeed all winemakers - as Dear Friends. For, during these recent months, when I have visited winemakers all over the country from Middlesbrough to Margate and from Southport to Seaford, I have been more than ever struck by the immediate friendly basis that is established whenever two or more winemakers meet together. As their initial handshake (or other introductory embrace) breaks, so they reach for their glasses. Really it is a most wonderful movement with which to be associated. I have often stated this year that I seem to be in this winemaking fraternity as much for the wonderful people I meet as for the wonderful wines we share together.

Actual news does not predominate in this newsletter. I am sure that you will find the 1975 Show Schedule full of all the important news that you are waiting to know. However, there are as always a variety of items that are worth passing on to you all.

Our congratulations have been sent on your behalf to our distinguished President and to his no less distinguished wife on the happy occasion of their Silver Wedding earlier this month. Andy has pretty well fully recovered from his spell as a patient in hospital and was found to be in very merry mood at the Judges' A.G.M. recently. I am sure we shall all be delighted to see his smiling countenance in our midst again at the National and Regional Shows in the spring of next year.

The need to co-ordinate our various Shows is still with us - and is still unsolved. The North West Federation, with great foresight, decided to move their Annual Show away from the busy autumn months, and it will be held in April of next year. But already April is filling up, and must give some concern to those of us who would wish to attend them all.

4/5/6th April, 1975	North West Fedn. Show	Southport
12th April, 1975	Sussex Fedn. Show	Haywards Heath
25/26/27th April, 1975	The National	Bognor Regis

Do please let your newsletter editor (that's me) know of your own Show dates as soon as possible. It may be possible to avoid serious clashes of events if somebody, somewhere, has up-to-date information about all the larger Shows.

I am sure that many of you read a letter which I wrote to the Winemaker on your behalf expressing the views of the Executive on the thoughts behind our new Constitution. This letter was published as a reply to Mr. Alan Smith who wrote an earlier letter to the same magazine on behalf of the Yorkshire Federation. I do not need to go over the subject matter again here, for we debated it very thoroughly at Margate. What I do need to do here is to clarify one statement I made in my letter. At the next A.G.M. at Bognor Regis, all the present Executive will be resigning. But I am sure that many of them will be offering themselves for re-election at that same meeting. It is certainly not the plan for all of us to opt out of running the Association and to leave it entirely to newcomers to carry on. Rather, it is the intention to act constitutionally, and thus to give a real opportunity to any new blood that is available to join the Executive next year. We hope that this challenge will be taken up, for it will give a new inspiration to our various endeavours for the good of the Association.

Perhaps the Executive have, in one respect, opted out of a certain responsibility. It had been done intentionally, for we have no desire to interfere in what should be the business of Federations and of Circles. Both the Feds. and the Circs. will be asked to nominate a representative before the A.G.M. commences on April 27th. How on earth they are going to do it we do not know - BUT WE DO CARE!

I personally should like to offer help. If any Circle or Federation has any bright idea for the simplification of this election, or if any Fed. or Circ. already has a particular name to put forward as a Fed. or Circ. Representative, then may I be enlightened. I will ensure that all such ideas or names are circulated before the F's and the C's get together for their final decision. You will have noticed that a suitable room, and also an unbiased convenor for such a meeting, are available at Bognor.

My thanks to Derby Circle for the two Wine Labels sent to me. In fact they were the only Circle to respond to my request - though others have since admitted that they didn't read the earlier newsletter that thoroughly. What I actually require is one label from each of those member circles that do print their own, to be used in the construction of the NAWB Display Stand. Any further offerings would still be most welcome for this purpose.

Two more innovations I undertook to carry out - and neither of these have really got off the ground until now. One was to instigate a Consumer Research Programme through our newsletter. I am now attempting to start this off, and I would ask if you would try to complete the questionnaire on the last sheet, and return it (SOON please) to myself.

The other idea was to begin a "Rolling Reporter" article on the winemaking matters that various speakers are advancing at our various Shows. Believe it or not, I attended eight big Shows this year, and the only speaker I actually heard was.....myself! I'd prefer NOT to report on what I advocated - not that I don't believe it all. It is simply that I couldn't do justice to myself.

However, at the AWNGJ meeting at Warwick recently there were two speakers, both from the other side of the Atlantic, and several of the points made in the talks I believe to be well worth passing on to NAWB members.

- (i) Talks have already been held on the possibility of an International Show. Admittedly these talks were held in North America, and they were not terribly fruitful, but nonetheless, the talks are taking place. It does not appear likely that a North Atlantic Winemakers' Show will take place in the immediate future.

- (ii) The Canadian winemakers have set up a (rather rigid) set of rules governing their Circle, Regional, Provincial and National Shows. The general basis of their competitive winemaking is that the three wines which succeed in a Circle Show go on to be submitted in the Regional Show. ("it may only be a matter of 150 to 200 miles to travel within a region"), and this same wine may be chosen to go on, and on again, to the higher levels. This sort of arrangement has at times been considered over here but we always come back to the stumbling block that a competitor would need at least four bottles of a particular wine before he could enter one of them into his Circle competition. Only then would he have the further three bottles available for submission for higher honours, etc., etc. In Britain it so often happens that the very last bottle of somebody's wine was submitted for a Show and therefore this repeated provision of the winning wine couldn't possibly work. Almost certainly, after hearing this talk, one gains the impression that the North American Winemakers ferment far greater quantities at a time than we do.
- (iii) Again in Canada: I find a certain contrast in approach to our hobby to be very enlightening. Over here in Britain we buy our Grape Concentrate and we use it, mainly as an additive, but we do not have the expectation of any superlative quality from it. We assume (and I do not think we are mistaken in our assumption) that grapes of mediocre quality have been used for grape concentrates, and we are thankful that some firm or other has processed even these for us. Poor they may be; but we can use them in moderation to improve our other ingredients.

In Canada the grape concentrate manufacturers are bidding competitively against the commercial vintners in order to buy the very best quality grapes for the Home Winemaking market. The concentrate produced is very expensive of course, but the belief is that, not only are excellent wines possible but that wines of Premier Grand Cru standard are also possible. The emphasis within the hobby really is aimed towards this ultimate standard of perfection. Should we too benefit from this approach? Should we not aim at the very highest standards regardless of costs? How many of us, I wonder, would be prepared to pay £7.00 or more in order to make a gallon of wine? It's an interesting thought.

So much for your first "Rolling Reporter". And so much too for my third Newsletter this year. Don't forget to drop me a line if there is something that should be said in the newsletter, and please don't forget to fill in the spaces on the last sheet.

A very Happy Christmas to all Members of the NAWB,

Philip Delmon.

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