

September 1974

NEWS AND VIEWS OCCASIONAL - INTERIM EDITION

Dear Members, both the new ones and the regulars over the years.

This letter seems a bit of a come-down after the magnificence of the last edition, but, although it is my intention to continue to issue well printed newsletters, in keeping with the service which we are hoping the National will continue to provide, yet I find that the printers are somewhat slow workers. They require six weeks notice before printing our news, so, rather than wait as long as that, I thought it far better to send you a typed letter for now and to get cracking on the next printed one as soon as I can afterwards.

First of all, some advance details of the forthcoming show schedule. Both Circles and Federations will need to begin to think about organising their entries for next April. There will be a Circle Wine Championship and a Circle Beer Championship. Similarly there will now be, for the first time ever, a Federation Wine Championship and a Federation Beer Championship. Special trophies will be awarded in these classes. The reason for the advance notice is the difficulty that some Circles do have, and the even greater difficulty that Federations will have, in arranging just how their representative wines and beers are to be selected. I really have no suggestions to make which will help the Circles and Federations to make their choice, but I do realise that plenty of advance thought has to go into the problem. If, of course, anyone has what they think is the perfect answer, then I should be delighted to publish it in order to help all the others.

Still somewhat difficult, but this time somewhat easier to solve, will be the problem of the nominated representatives to the Executive next year - one from the Circles, and one from the Federations. We have been told by the critics of the new Constitution that it will be impossible, but we do not really believe this. You will find, on the Conference Programme, when it comes to you at the end of the year, that a room has been set aside at the hotel for the two separate meetings. Circle delegates and Federation delegates will be able to meet together (if they wish), and discuss their nomination. A Convenor will be provided at each meeting to assist in the running of the preliminaries - again, only if his/her assistance is required. It is felt that with this meeting place being provided, and with many Circle and Federation delegates being present, a suitable single nomination will emerge.

Now to turn away from the administrative problems for a moment, (I shall return to a few more later), and get to some News.

Mr. George Christmas, of Bognor Circle, has joined the Executive as a co-opted member, to give help as the local liaison officer for the 1975 Show. I am sure that all members wish him well, if only for the fact that a lot of the success of the weekend will depend upon his efforts and those of the local circles.

Mr. and Mrs. Stagg - Leslie and Freda to all of us - those stalwart winemakers of the Midlands, are shortly leaving the beauties of Birmingham for the delights of Dorset. Lucky Dorset. Hard luck, Birmingham. We wish them well of course, but I'm sure they will not be disappearing from our gatherings.

The new NAWB Display stand, which will be appearing at several of the larger shows - and the smaller ones too, if anyone would care to ask us to come - has now been constructed, and it looks good! At least, it will do when all the information and photographs go onto it. When I saw it last Sunday it was, like a bride, all in white.

I had an appealing letter this morning from a lady in Southampton. She understands that Dandelion Wine is capable of curing rheumatism, and she wants to buy, if possible, enough Dandelion Wine to cure her. I have written to explain that she cannot buy wine, but I will put the request out to anyone in Southampton so that they may perhaps be able to help the lady with the present of a bottle. So, if a Dandelion Winemaker in Southampton is reading this, perhaps he would call on Mrs. Ross, 61A Cleveland Road, Soton.

I cannot be absolutely sure now if I published the date of the 1976 Show and Conference at Nottingham University. But even if I did, that still doesn't prevent me from doing so again. It will be on April 9th, 10th and 11th and I recommend that you book the date in your diaries NOW.

PERMANENT SITE OR FOR EVER PERIPATETIC?

Suggestions have been made that The National could well settle down in the same place for several years running, always assuming that an ideal place could be found. It looks as though Nottingham University, which we visit in 1976, could be such an ideal venue. Of course, there are a number of "ifs", but being in the heart of the country it may well be satisfactory to all our far flung members.

Perhaps you would all begin to think about it. Would you be happy if the National Show stayed at Nottingham University for a few years running?

When you have thought - LET US KNOW.

So far, I have heard only one objection to the idea, that being from the Chairman of Nottingham Circle, who is afraid that he will have to do all the work of the Show year after year after year.

APOLOGY

One letter of criticism has reached me and I feel I must apologise for upsetting the gentleman concerned. It was from Mr. C. Bates, who was the judge referred to in the story I told of a First Prize being deliberately awarded to a full sweet wine in a Dry Red class - "because it was such a good sweet wine". Mr. Bates quite rightly points out that as I wasn't there myself, I should not make humorous comment on his decision. Very true. My apologies are due to you Mr. Bates, though I must admit that I wouldn't have done it myself. But at the time of writing I was thinking in terms of the standards of AWNGJ judges. There are of course, hundreds of other judges all over the country who work to their own standards, and I had temporarily forgotten that these other standards still existed. My hope remains that the competitors did realise what standards were being applied, because then they could ALL put in sweet red wines in the hope of winning a prize.

REPLY TO AN OPEN LETTER

A few months ago, a letter appeared in the "Winemaker" magazine from Mr. W. Smith of the Yorkshire Federation. This open letter reiterated the comments that Mr. Smith had made at the Margate A.G.M. of the Association. He feels still that we have failed to take advantage of a great opportunity to become a three tier organisation, with Members, Circles and Federations all constitutionally structuring the whole organisation. I have written to Mr. Smith in reply, pointing out yet again, that advantages of a voluntary three tier organisation (such as we now have) as opposed to the compulsory one that he sees. I also explained to him, as I do now to all our members, that at the Bognor Regis A.G.M. all present members of the Executive (who consider themselves as a temporary caretaker committee for this first year

of the N.A.W.B) will resign. Obviously, several will be prepared to stand again, but the election of members for next year will be completely open. Anybody who really has the well-being of our Association at heart, and that most assuredly includes Mr. Smith himself, cannot only stand for election, but stand a great chance of being elected. The opportunity to serve is there; let us now see your names being put forward in order to try to do better, perhaps in the coming years, than we have managed to do.

PLASTIC CONTAINERS

A letter reached the Executive recently concerning a talk given by Dr. Thompson of the University of Surrey concerning the dangers of storing wine in plastic containers. Knowing full well that this is a recurring question of some concern to our members, we have had the matter thoroughly investigated, with the following results:-

- (a) Dr. Thompson himself, who gave the talk on a BBC programme, assures us that in his opinion the use of PVC containers constitutes no hazard to winemakers.
- (b) The British Plastics Federation have issued the following press statement recently:-

"Plastics in the packaging field are used in contact with food and drink in great quantities. But there are many different plastics with many different additives used in the making of plastic articles and finished products. Innumerable articles are made for uses which are not connected with food, for example dustbins, and the manufacturers of such articles make them for use as dustbins and not for containers for home brewing. It could be that they are perfectly satisfactory for such use, but not necessarily so. The B.P.F. therefore recommend that non-coloured polyethylene (polythene) film liners should be used inside a plastic dustbin or any other plastic container not manufactured specifically for use in contact with food and drink.

In the light of current knowledge, and providing that recommended precautions are followed, the hazards arising from home brewing in plastics are negligible".

And what more is there for me to say?

Only to remind you that time is running out for the payment of your NAWB subscription.

And as always of course, may your wines go well.

Philip Delmon.