

AUGUST, 1979

NEWS

Dear Members,

During the years I have been a member of the Executive, the most prevalent complaint from the membership has been the fact that the Executive devotes all its time to the Annual Conference and Show and that it does little to promote our hobby in any other way. I must be honest and say that my feelings are, that the raison d'être of the National was mainly the above Conference and Show. The Executive have always been very conscious of their responsibility to the members and much discussion has taken place over the years for a way to widen the scope of the National. Unfortunately the main problem has been a lack of funds. One suggestion which I put forward for discussion was the setting up of a Board of examiners to set some sort of standard, similar to the City and Guild type of examination for lecturers upon our hobby at evening classes. At the present time Local Authorities have no guidance as to the credentials of the persons they appoint as teachers of our hobby. Some are obviously very good but from reports over the years, some who are lecturing have only a smattering of knowledge. The idea of a Certificate of Competence, does at the outset seem a very good idea. It is only when you go into the nuts and bolts of the idea that it is appreciated what is involved. The getting together of the candidates and holding examinations all over Great Britain; the cost and time of marking papers - to say nothing of the need for qualified persons to set the required standard. You begin to realise that it would be a costly business. I mention the above idea just to set the record straight that your Executive have given the enlargement of their activities quite a lot of thought. Once again, like so many things in this modern world, cost is the inhibiting factor.

Some years ago we held a Seminar with the help of Pressed Steel Fisher near Coventry. A full day's programme of high class speakers, but I regret that the attendance left a lot to be desired. Only just over fifty persons attended and, apart from the Executive, a large proportion of those were from the local club. This was before the days of high petrol costs. You may be wondering where all this is leading to. So now I come to the heart of the matter. For the last few issues of the NAVO I have been advertising the Executive's latest effort to widen the scope of the National. You will recall that they had arranged a dinner dance at the Manor Hotel, Meriden. This was to have been an annual function and we had also obtained special rates for those wishing to stay overnight. Meriden was selected because it was in the centre of England and close to a large number of wineclubs. We had to guarantee 200 members attending which, as you will appreciate, involved quite a large sum of money. Despite the very hard work of our Social Secretary, Len Drysdale, and the fact that the event had been advertised in the last three issues of NAVO plus a large poster at the entrance to the Show at Brighton, the response has been disastrous. Apart from the Executive and families, only a handful of members evinced any interest. Your Executive were faced with a large commitment and have, with great regret, had to cancel the event. They appreciate that petrol costs have escalated but even taking all this into account the response was dismal. I would like to thank the few loyal members who did offer their support.

One suggestion from Stan Baker was that we should have extended the day by having speakers in the afternoon. This was a valid point, but as the initial response was so poor to have booked extra room space for speakers plus the cost of speakers; the Executive decided against increasing the range of the affair. Also, an earlier start would have made it more difficult for those travelling a long distance.

Speaking with my private member's hat on - I have never quite understood why it is that the National does not seem to engender the same enthusiasm and loyalty as that seen by members of Federations to their own Federation, or is the North West of which I am a member, unique this way? Your views would be appreciated. This lack of interest by

members cannot be written off by pointing out the cost because for over a year now I have been appealing for hints and tips on wine and beer from the members and despite the fact that several members have written in expressing their disappointment that no tips were forthcoming, the response has still been nil. This would only cost a little time and an 8p stamp.

Membership

May I again draw members' attention to the fact that membership fees for year 1979/80 are due and should be forwarded to the Membership Secretary, Jim Chettle, 45 Oak Tree Drive, Gedling, Notts. Please send promptly and this will ensure that you will receive your News and Views. As you will no doubt appreciate the cost of printing and postage of the newsletter is considerable and we cannot keep sending it out to members who have not rejoined in the hope that they eventually will do so.

Judges Stewards

A letter to members from Alan Briggs, your Convener of Judges.

"May I ask, through N.A.V.O., for any members who will be attending the National at Blackpool in March, 1980, that we shall be requiring the usual 100 or so Judges' Stewards, and will members give some preliminary thought to this and, if interested, write to me at my home address, which is still - 4 Suffolk Avenue, Carlton Grange, Batley, West Yorks, WF17. 7AN.

No immediate acknowledgment will be given, but interested members will be informed nearer the date of arrangements. I would like to stress to any who are thinking of taking their Guild exam, that the National is still the best Show for gaining experience and stewarding along with a National Judge for either Wine or Beer.

This letter will appear also in a News-letter nearer the Show date but in the meantime, it is never too early to start planning one's career as a Steward or Judge and also to be top of the list for the National Show. I look forward to some replies, please, please, please."

ALAN BRIGGS
Convener of Judges

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & SHOW, BLACKPOOL. 28th, 29th and 30th March, 1980

Plans are in full swing for our forthcoming Show in Blackpool. It is some time since we were last in the North West of England and we are sure that you are all in for a great time. The Friday night 'get-together' will be held in the Imperial Hotel. The main functions, competitions, etc., will be held in the Winter Gardens, which has oceans of room for all the entries.

Conference Hotel

The Conference Hotel for the Blackpool Show will be the Imperial Hotel, Blackpool. This is one of the leading hotels in Blackpool and they have quoted a special price for members booking in for the conference. The price is £15 bed and breakfast. All bookings to obtain this special price must be made through our Social Secretary, Len Drysdale, 7 Richmondfield Drive, Barwick in Elmet, near Leeds.

The Imperial is a Four-Star Hotel, and we are promised a great hotel, a change from Brighton and hardly any dearer.

CIRCLES

Each year at the Annual Conference a representative is elected to speak on behalf of all the member circles. This year their representative is Mrs. Audrey Newton, 40 County Road North, Hull, North Humberside. In the past the Circle representative has never had any communication from any of the member Circles. I can hardly believe that you are all completely satisfied with what we do. I know Audrey would be delighted to hear from any of the Circles, with any ideas or suggestions.

VIEWS

It hardly seems a year since I was writing about the World Wine Fair at Bristol. I have just returned from this year's Fair. Fifty winemakers from the North West had a really wonderful time. We stayed once again at the Euro Crest hotel who looked after us very well. Our organiser, Ken Scambler had the foresight to book us in about six

months prior to the event. We also had the pleasure of meeting members of Hemel Hempstead Guild who were also staying there. I thought that this year's Wine Fair had improved upon last year. It was better presented with larger stands. The wines on show were on the whole from the medium price range, but I found that once you got talking to the stand representatives, and they found that you had a real interest, then they always seemed to find something a little better to drink. Two tastings stay in the mind, Andrew Low who deals in rare wines, was kind enough to give me a small taste of a very rare old champagne cognac, 1916, and a 1945 vintage port. He had a fascinating stand with rare wines at prices only the really wealthy could afford. One that I remember was a 1926 Ch. Petrus at £226 per bottle. We all have our own personal likes and I once again enjoyed the Spanish Rioja's The Sherston Wine Co., of Malmesbury, Wilts, stand. They stock a really fantastic range, their Muga, 1973, being especially good. I bought some of this last year and I must confess I was again tempted and succumbed.

On the Sunday our party visited Smiles Brewery in Bristol. This is run by the two owners and a helper and they produce about 400 gallons a week. They produce two types of bitter beer and even though it was before lunch on the Sunday most of us did justice to their beers. I am pleased to say a lot of the ladies joined in. It was a really exhilarating weekend. I am sure it will become an annual event.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reply to Roy Roycroft's letter:

You may recall that in the May, 1979, issue of NAVO several points were raised over wine classification. I stated that I would place this letter before our Schedule Committee for their comments. Their comments will also be relevant to Stan Baker's letter published in this issue. Here is Alan Briggs' reply on behalf of your Schedule Committee, which was endorsed at a recent meeting by your Executive. In view of their reply I have forwarded Roy's letter, along with the Schedule Committee reply, to the Hon. Secretary of Guild of Judges, Vic Goffin, in case they wish to comment:

Dear Ken,

The Schedule Committee which was composed of Messrs. Briggs, Butcher, Chiverton, Christmas and Drysdale recently met to discuss the schedule for the National at Blackpool in 1980, and one item on the agenda was to study the letter which was written in the last N.A.V.O. by Mr. E. A. Roycroft.

You will remember his letter on the subject of wines by purpose or style.

Whilst we had a great deal of sympathy with Mr. Roycroft and fully understand the meaning of his letter, we, the Schedule Committee, felt that there would be many new competitors who would not understand what is meant by, for example, Red Table - Elderberry base, in what is our existing Fruit Red dry section and would be exhibiting wines which were far too sweet for the class but yet would be acceptable to the competitors themselves, so we thought it is still better to include the word "Dry" which to all winemakers means "No detectable sugar on the palate".

However, we did not turn down his suggestions for the above, but for the following reasons:

1. The last rule in our Schedule has always been with regard to referring to the handbook of the National Guild of Wine and Bar judges for guidance.
2. The N.G.W.B.J. has just recently produced a reprint of their handbook and if this is referred to on pages 24 to 26 inclusive, classes such as Red dry, Table white dry, Table wine rosé medium dry are quoted (as examples) and these are the exact terms we use in our schedule and have done for many years.

So, bearing this in mind, we felt that until the Guild take up Mr. Roycroft's suggestion and completely alter the Guild Handbook, then we should still be guided by their suggested classes and definitions.

To conclude, may we quote the very last sentence from the Guild Handbook on page 27, "However, major alterations are likely to increase judging problems as well as to incur the displeasure of the Exhibitors".

We, the Schedule Committee, hope you will publish this, our reply, in the hope that it may bring further comment and discussion from the members of N.A.W.B.
pp Schedule Committee, Alan Briggs, Convener of Judges

From Stan Baker, 131 Gordon Road, Chatham, Kent:

Dear Ken,

"When will more classes by style be introduced into the National schedule?" is the question asked by Roy Roycroft in the May, 1979, NAVO. In my opinion, it can more surely come about if the exhibitors and judges place pressure on the National Show schedule Committee. The colour/ingredient classes currently in use have served for ten or more years and they have been most useful in reducing the size of classes, but I think that it is now time that in the light of further experience, they should be improved.

Roy's classification of the purpose wines is essentially related to the compatibility of wines with food, but not everyone makes wine with a menu in mind. Many winemakers produce social wines for sipping in front of the "Telly" and these can vary considerably in style. Some people prefer white wines, others prefer reds; some people drink only sweet wines, others are quite happy with a bone dry red wine as a social tipple. Tastes vary considerably.

Sweetness alone, therefore, is not the only answer. Wines within the same group may have a variety of character which may be derived from the type of ingredient, its ripeness, the method of fermentation and the amount and style of maturation. Often wines may be equally suitable in more than one class - some of the bone dry white wines of Burgundy and the Rioja are accepted as commercial aperitifs. Alcohol content can also vary - some table wines have more alcohol than some commercial Dessert wines. Roy did not agree with my suggestion in the NAVO of February, 1978, that "medium" classes should be introduced into Show schedules but some commercial producers do not think that labelling a wine as medium is an "impossibility". The most prestigious exporter of "medium" wines is the seven hundred year old firm of antinori in Northern Italy. Their "Medium sweet" table wine could be defined as a "Sweet table" in a Show schedule.

Introducing more purpose classes into the National schedule should not prove difficult. I have advocated the introduction of purpose classes in Shows for some years, primarily to get Schedule Committees to think in terms other than root grain or flower classes. In my opinion, it will do much to make the competitors at the National think in terms of wine style. It must be remembered that many of the exhibitors at the National are competing for the first time. There is nothing in the rules which states that their wines have to gain awards at preliminary Shows. This idea has been projected for some years, but it has two disadvantages. Wines sometimes deteriorate and Judges cannot always agree. One need only look at the tasting comments of three "expert" commercial judges to see how widely their assessment varies. I would only suggest that the NAWB schedule committee allow a class for each of the main types in the Grape concentrate classes. It is rather difficult to assess the qualities of Burgundies against Clarets. Loire type wines against German, etc. I look forward to the outcome of Roy's letter with interest. Cheers!

Stan Baker.

From Bob Marsdon, 117 Haig Road, Hillingdon, Middlesex.

Dear Ken,

Whilst quaffing a pint of draught stout brewed by Beamish & Co., of Cork, I wondered whether the term Irish type Stout, as used in our competitions, was quite correct?

The Judges Handbook describes Irish Stout as full bodied and extremely dry. To my uneducated palate, the Irish Stout brewed by Beamish & Co., appeared decidedly sweeter than "Guinness" and certainly had a lot less body. Perhaps by trying to emulate commercial products, we are not specific enough.

Another case is in our fortified classes. The definition Port-type does not state which colour, as there are white ports as well as red. I have often wondered what a Judge's reactions to a white wine in the Port Class would be.

I have also heard sweet sherry being described as rich and dark, yet Crofts market a sweet sherry, which is as light as a dry one. Would a pale sherry lose points for colour, in a Sweet Sherry class?

Finally, in the Middlesex Festival we have a Madiera, sweet, Class. Malmsey is heavier and sweeter than Bual, which is also a sweet Madeira, so how does a judge assess the degree of sweetness in this class? I would like to hear Judges' comments on these points, through our "News and Views".

In conclusion, on behalf of the "Wembley Guild of Winemakers", I would like to sincerely congratulate everyone concerned with the organisation and running of the National Conference at Brighton. We thought the stewards and judges did a particularly magnificent job, in what appeared to be rather cramped surroundings.

Yours fraternally in winemaking".

Bob Marsdon.

Re Bob Marsdon's letter -

I think that these are matters which should be taken up with NGWBJ as NAWB use their handbook as their guide. I have on several occasions both regionally and nationally suggested dry stout should be described as 'Guinness style'. On each occasion my fellow committee members were of the opinion it might be illegal. As it is only to be used as an adjective and no sale is involved I still do not agree with them - but there you are. I take your point regarding red and white port. Regarding the Sherry and Madeiras, this is one of my hobby horses. Once you make reference to Commercial wines in a schedule it is beholden upon everyone to ensure that the judges have an extensive knowledge of commercial wine styles. Something that I feel is not emphasised enough in most amateur wine judges' examinations. This is a personal opinion. Like Mr. Marsdon I would be interested to hear through NAVO the opinions of our members who are also members of NGWBJ.

I regret to have to say this but in the past when controversial subjects have been aired through the medium of NAVO they have, for most part, been regrettably silent. How about it, Judges? We would like to hear from you. Any views expressed in NAVO are accepted as purely personal views, unless otherwise stated. (K.H., Editor)

From Frank Scholes, 7 Warren Avenue, Portobello, Wakefield, WF2 7JW, West Yorks.

Dear Mr. Hill,

In the latest News & Views I was hoping we were going to get a few tips from the past and present National Trophy winners, but in spite of all your appeals they are sticking to all their secrets. However, the interesting letter from E. A. Roycroft made up for this, but I wonder if his suggestion would lead to better judging and give competitors more satisfaction? I am at present very doubtful, having on one occasion entered a sweet wine in a wine by style class and been told by the judge it was not sweet enough - yet it had the same degree of sweetness as its commercial counterpart. What is sweet to one would be like syrup to another. In my early competing days the answers I got from judges were 'too much acid', 'not enough acid', 'not enough alcohol', 'too high in alcohol' dry wines were 'sweet'. On seeing a testing kit on the market which would test for Pectin acid sugar and starch I promptly invested in one and, as proved to me, money well spent.

Having been able to test some of the commercial wines I use the results as a yardstick for my own, but I am not trying to give any impression that I should be on a winner every time as other factors enter into it and I have since been very amused at some answers I have got from judges - one particular judge judged a wine of mine three years in succession: first year First Prize; second year Third Prize; third year he decided it was too high in acid. The acid test revealed that it was the same as the same type as the commercial one, and the same as the previous two. Another judge told me that a dry wine of mine was sweet but the sugar test registered 0.05% sugar and as commercial dry wines can give a sugar reading of 2 or 3%.

Another kindly informed me that my wine was over sulphited, seeing that it had never seen the stuff I wondered how it had got in, unless it was in his imagination or he had not cleared his palate properly. These are just a few of the answers we get, but some of us poor competitors are gluttons for punishment year after year.

Before any change in wines by definition are brought in, what I would like to see changed is the labelling system and a similar system as used by the North Western

Federation. If we are to have competition numbers then this number should be covered and only the class number should be showing until the wines have been judged. I am not suggesting that there has been or is any malpractice, but any judge could know anyone's competition number whether by accident or intentionally, the temptation is there and it should be removed. If it is impossible to prove any trickery in this particular hobby, I have known it happen in other hobbies and how it was done, but been unable to prove it. Where there is any loophole it should be plugged.

And on a closing note: I can and do make allowances for these hard-working judges' palates.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

Frank Scholes.

Regarding Mr. Scholes' comments, on the fact that home-made wines with the same acidity as Commercial wines have drawn adverse comment from some judges due to the suggestion that the Home-made were too high in acid. I think that a direct comparison of acidity by titration can at times be misleading. As I understand it (and I'm no scientist) the titration test gives the total acid present in a wine and not necessarily the tasteable acid present. There is often a disparity between the two, due to what are known as 'buffer solutions' present in the wine which can vary from wine to wine. I think that there are also other considerations which determine the apparent acidity on the palate, such as lack of body or fruit in the wine also tannin. This can be summed up as lack of balance. What do our readers think? Regarding the use of the North West blanking off labelling system, I brought this before your Executive and they rejected it because of the trouble it causes at Judges at the Bar. Exhibitors quote their exhibitors number and the judge only has his own judge's reference number. The exhibitor then has to look for his bottle on the show stand to trace his exhibitor's number and Judges reference number before the judge can identify it on his judging sheet to be able to comment upon the judging. (K.H., Editor)

TO: Mr. Ken Hill

MASTER OF WINE

Conal R. Gregory, who many remember both lectured on wine palate appreciation and helped to form the expert panel at the December N.G.W.B.J. Weekend Seminar, has become a Master of Wine. This coveted Award is held by only slightly over 100 in the world since it was first instituted by the Worshipful Company of Vintners in 1953. It is given to those very few who pass a gruelling series of written and tasting examinations which are held annually in May. Mr. Gregory is an independent Wine Consultant as well as being both City Wine Correspondent of "The Daily Telegraph" and Drinks Editor of "Club Secretary". Many have heard his lectures in his regular series given at Leith's School of Food & Wine in London, where he is Principal Lecturer in Wines & Spirits.

From Denis Banfield, 41 Beverley Road, Barnhurst, Kent.

Dear Mr. Hill,

I have just purchased the new revised Judges Handbook, and 'hooray' Aperitif is defined further than stimulation of appetite - range between dry and medium sweet, which cuts right into Mr. Roycroft's letter; it also cuts into the Judges Handbook, i.e. page 24, last comment "It is extremely difficult to judge accurately when both dry and sweet varieties are included, and then goes on with suggested schedules for shows. Aperitif in the small to large shows, and the last one suggested a dry class and a sweet class. Surely "Medium Sweet" must be stated and dryness stated on all schedules for Aperitif.

I would like to bring up one further point with Mr. Roycroft's letter: Definitions - The revised Judges Handbook omits the definition of Social wine, in "Roy's" (if I may) a social is lacking in characteristics to their type - Red less tannin, white less acid etc., to what they should be for purpose. Then goes on Dry social, social and sweet social. Then has the cheek to say the smallest shows, classes could include Red social, white social, etc. Let's keep all Wine Shows, large or small, to a defined high Standard.

My own wine club's Annual Show for this year, states: 'Unless otherwise stated, all wines will be of the social type', and goes on to give the old Judges Handbook's definition, i.e. Social wine is less strong and rich than a desert though with more flavour and sweetness than a table wine.

If I may, I would like to give my definition of a social, considering the fact that we amateur wine makers enjoy a good Social life besides entering shows. The turn out of our wines don't always come up to Show standards, but are still palatable. The best are held back, remainder is sweetened, blended, etc., and believe me, when six or seven different social wines are up on that table, long before halfway through, who cares if your friends' wine lacks Tannin, Acid, etc.,!!

Yours faithfully,
Denis Banfield, Springhead Wine Circle.

It was difficult to judge the winning letter this issue as all were more or less on a similar subject. In the end I selected Stan Baker of Kent for the winning £2 (well it was the longest!)

My thanks to all who write and keep the interest alive. I do appreciate all their letters. K.H. Editor.

O C C A S I O N A L

Ben Turner and Roy Roycroft have a new book coming on the market in the fall. It is The Winemaker's Encyclopaedia (Faber and Faber). More about this in the next issue.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

North West Federation and Show at Pontin's Camp, Ainsdale, Nr. Southport, Lancs, on 19th, 20th and 21st October, 1979. All the Classes are open to all. Last year 2,500 exhibits and over 1,400 attended.

Accommodation forms and schedules from Mr. and Mrs. Fordey, 226 Queensway, Rochdale, Lancs.

This is the biggest Show in the Country, apart from the National.

May you never have an empty glass.

Ken Hill, Editor

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