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An invitation is extended to all those involved in the field of animal production to apply for membership of the New Zealand Society of Animal Production at our website www.nzsap.org.nz

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

S. McGUINNESS, Gisborne.

AT the Ninth Annual Conference of this Society, Mr. A. H. Ward said in his Presidential Address "All Conferences have been notable for a high standard of constructive and destructive criticism—so much so that it is rumoured that only the most hardened and more veteran, or more aggressive members of our Society dare submit a paper for reading." Undoubtedly that rumour was a great exaggeration of the true position, and my appearance before you to-night is, in my opinion, proof of this contention.

Following the New Year, I realised with some alarm that with the change of dates for the Conference only six weeks remained in which to prepare this address. Searching for inspiration, I looked over some of the reports of past proceedings. On the face page of the copy at hand appeared a list of Past Presidents since the formation of the Society.

1941-42: Mr. J. M. Ranstead.	1946-47: Dr. I. J. Cunningham.
1942-43: Dr. C. P. McMeekan.	1947-48: Dr. W. M. Hamilton.
1943-44: Prof. Wm. Riddet.	1948-49: Mr. A. H. Ward.
1944-45: Dr. J. F. Filmer.	1949-50: Prof. I. L. Campbell.
1945-46: Mr. C. M. Hume.	1950-51: Mr. E. A. Clark.

All are men held in high regard by both Research workers and Farmers of this country, and I would like, as a farmer, to pay on behalf of the Livestock Farmers of New Zealand, a tribute to them for the work they have done and are doing for Animal Production in New Zealand. Their ideals can be the ideals of this Society, and so long as this is remembered, this Society will continue to flourish.

I am deeply conscious of the honour you conferred upon me in electing me to the position of President of your Society. I am also conscious of the fact that, in electing me to this position, you have recorded your appreciation of the efforts of farmer members in furthering the ideals of the organisation.

One feels that it would not be inappropriate to refer at this stage to the objects in view as enunciated when the Society was formed in 1941.

These objects were:—

- (a) To provide an organisation to bring about active collaboration of all workers in the field of animal production.
- (b) To provide an annual meeting of members at which papers will be read and discussed.
- (c) To take such action as may be deemed necessary to foster improvement in animal production.

Obviously the objects are wide and give considerable scope to any executive who are faced with the arranging of a Conference programme. The original founders are to be congratulated on their vision in providing this scope.

From time to time criticism arises regarding the Conference programme. On the one hand the Research worker considers that too much bias is given towards the farmer members; also I frequently get the opposite criticism of the programme from my farmer friends.

I think that both sections could well remember that first object (a) of this Society is to bring about collaboration between ALL workers in the field of animal production. I feel that the term "all workers" must include interested farmers and research workers if the best results are to be achieved.

One can readily understand the feelings of the Research worker, if the Conference programme has too great a bias towards the farmer or practical angle. It must be recognised by Farmer members that this is the only opportunity Research workers have of all meeting together during the year; and this being the case, they must be given the fullest consideration.

The greatest good can only come of this association of Research workers and Farmers if both sides recognise that the objects of this Society cannot be achieved without patience and toleration and a full recognition of aims of the foundation members. Too great a bias to either one or the other will prevent the fulfilment of this ideal.

World events all point to the increasing importance of food production. A statement recently emanating from Britain, to the effect that New Zealand provides Britain with more meat than Australia and the Argentine together, justifies me I think when I repeat once again that Primary Production is New Zealand's most important industry. We can be proud of our achievements in this direction, but we cannot be complacent. Mr. E. Bruce Levy, on his retirement as Director of the Grasslands Division, expressed disappointment that the New Zealand farmer had been slow to adopt the practices proved by his Department to lead to better pasture, and through that to increased output of meat, butter and wool.

I am sure that you will all agree with me when I say that the New Zealand farmer has made liberal use of the results of Mr. Levy's work, in the face of the social, economic and political changes which have taken place over the past 20 years.

Reduction in the number of workers engaged in farming pursuits has progressively declined since 1936, but by mechanisation and by taking advantage of improved farming practices which aim to take full advantage of our extremely favourable climate, New Zealand's production per head in primary products is the highest in the world. If all sections of the community were prepared to shoulder their responsibilities in the way that farmers and their employees are doing, we would have much less cause for concern for the future economic outlook of New Zealand.

At various times during the past 40 years efforts have been made to co-ordinate Agricultural Research in New Zealand. Several boards have been set up for the purpose of advising the Government of the day on all aspects of Agriculture and on Scientific Research. Most of these are now in recess or extinct, largely, it seems, because of their lack of executive power. Being advisory bodies, they relied largely on the enthusiasm of their members and their Minister. Invariably this enthusiasm has soon waned and faded away, leaving nothing but dusty files in some appropriate pigeon-hole.

The only exception to the above has been the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, which was set up under the Scientific and Industrial Research Act, 1926. This piece of legislation was cited as "an Act to make provision for the Promotion and Organisation of Scientific and Industrial Research and for its Application to the Primary and Secondary Industries of New Zealand."

The functions of the Department are defined under Section 5, which reads as follows:—

- (1) The Department shall be charged with the maintenance and administration of such scientific services as MAY be transferred to or MAY be hereafter created or established and placed under its charge.
- (2) It shall also be the duty of the Department to advise the Government on all questions of policy relating to Scientific matters that MAY be referred to it.

Section 6 provided for the setting up of an Advisory Council of eight members.

The Scientific and Industrial Research Amendment Act of 1931 provided for the appointment of a Committee by the Council, to be known as the Agricultural Division of the Scientific Research Council.

That these bodies appointed under this Act and its amendment have done a worthwhile job, few of us will question.

It must be remembered, however, that their powers are limited. It is entirely in the hands of the Minister or Cabinet as to whether they are effective. Remember that the word MAY is used three times in defining their functions.

Such powers are too limited for such an important body. Where such wide political control is possible, many highly important projects must be strangled at birth (if they have been allowed to reach that stage) because of political expediency.

Under our present set-up, the opportunity for Research Policy to be dictated by politicians whose outlook can be biased by Party considerations is too great. Too often policy can be dictated by a demand for the spectacular because of political considerations.

One recognises that the expenditure of National funds is a grave responsibility and one which must not be lightly carried out.

Too tight a control of funds, on the other hand, can be just as big a menace.

I venture to say that few of you here engaged in a Government Department will not be aware of occasions when money has been expended because a grant has been made and if that grant is not expended during that financial year it will not be again available. In other words, it cannot be carried forward into the next year's expenditure. The plain fact is that it is a disadvantage to you and your section or Department to be economical under such circumstances.

Political control of the Body or Council charged with the responsibility of directing Research and of advising the Government on the allotment of funds should be as small as possible. Precedents for this are available, both in Britain and Australia. I am sure that much good would result as a whole to this country if our Research was directed by an organisation charged with authority, the basis of which would be a close study of the regulations governing the Commonwealth Research Council of Australia and Research Bureau of Great Britain.

The Royal Commission on the Sheep Industry in New Zealand, which published its report in 1949, recognised that co-ordination of Research on Agricultural matters was highly important and made recommendations accordingly. We may not agree with their recommendations, but we can wholeheartedly agree with them on the importance of co-ordination.

Dr. John Hammond, of the Animal Nutrition Research Institute of Cambridge University, reported on the Organisation of Animal Research in New Zealand in 1938, and his report was reprinted in Bulletin No. 63 by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

Evidence is not lacking as to the need for greater and more efficient co-ordination in at least the Agricultural and Animal Research fields. Why have we not done more? Is it because politicians are loath to part with power, or is it because of departmental jealousy and jockeying for position, or is it because of indifference? Surely if we are sincere in our desire to increase the efficiency of agriculture we must question at times the wisdom of separate and competitive departmental control of plant and animal research.

Few farmers, if any, will deny the value of research to their daily round of work—more will look at the total amount being spent in New Zealand and question as to how it is spent. Let us be sure that our organisation of research is such that we get full value for the money expended. A sound and commonsense setup must silence criticism.

Dr. Hamilton, in his paper entitled "Farming in the New Zealand Economy and the Role of Research," published in the Australian Veterinary Journal of July, 1951, gave figures which, when brought up-to-date, indicate that the average over the past five years spent on Agricultural Research in New Zealand is .42% of our gross farming income. He stated when questioned that it was usual for large firms in Secondary Industry to spend up to 2% of their gross income. I quote these figures to show that we are not being extravagant, in the total amount we spend, when it also must be realised that of the total spent it is estimated that approximately two-thirds are spent on Research and one-third on Service.

What we must be certain of is that we spend to the best advantage.

We must be sure that Governments in their occasional enthusiasm for economy do not economise on research in Agriculture.

A sound Agriculture is of benefit to everyone in New Zealand, and the Research Worker can play his part to that soundness if he is not discouraged by parsimony.

During the past 10 or 12 years, the Farming Industry of New Zealand has built up huge reserves in the various Industry Accounts. Could better use be made of some of these funds than to place them in trust with our Research Council, or Research Bureau—call it what you wish? The income from this Trust Account could be used for purposes to be specified.

With care, the purposes could be selected so that benefit, direct or indirect, would accrue to almost every farmer in New Zealand who had contributed those funds.

Efficient research entails an adequate trained staff, and perhaps in an attempt to achieve this it is time we had our own School of Veterinary Science in New Zealand. Many of you have a much fuller knowledge of our requirements in this direction than I have. I do feel that no better use could be made—and certainly none that would give wider benefits—than the utilisation of some of the above funds for the purposes of offering wider education to our Technical Staff.

The Sheep Industry Commission in their report stated: "We consider that the Dairy Industry is the best organised Agricultural or Pastoral Industry in New Zealand, and that every effort should be made to promote the same degree of organisation in the Sheep Industry." They also drew attention to the need for a general survey, to define the problems needing research and place them according to their relative importance. As a sheep farmer, I am very conscious of the difficulties involved in this survey. I do not, however, think that our difficulties are any greater than were faced by the Dairy Industry when they started their survey work.

Experience indicates that the sheep farmer is to-day in a very much more receptive mood towards survey work than was the dairy farmer when the Dairy Board started their work. One feels sure that more could be done were there a true recognition of the need for placing the sheep farmer's problems in their position of relative importance.

Is there a real recognition by our leaders in the industry that the best way to get help with our problems is to get to work and help ourselves?

A case in point is the work at present being done on infertility. Is the industry prepared to do its bit towards this work or is it prepared to lean on the Government and individual enthusiasts to ensure the work being done?

This is work that must pay dividends. Sufficient has already been carried out to indicate that an improvement in lambing percentages can be looked for in the future.

With approximately 20-million breeding ewes in the Dominion, it requires little imagination to realise that any work which is likely to give an increase in lambing percentage has more than a fair chance of being profitable nationally. In run cattle too, ample opportunity of improving calving percentages is offered. How many of those who get low percentages of calves know the reason?

I know that good work is being done by officers of the Joint Committee of the Meat and Wool Boards. Are we doing enough? We are so much behind the Dairy Industry that we must make increased efforts.

The Sheep Industry is not getting its share of monies available for Research work, and it cannot expect anything else until it is in a position to give better than a guess at the relative importance of its problems.

In conclusion, I would like to pay a tribute to our Research Workers. I believe that we have as good a team as anywhere else in the World and their enthusiasm is unequalled. Let us, as farmers, do our part by ensuring that we do everything possible to give them the necessary facilities and information, both of which are essential for successful work.