

## OPENING ADDRESS

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Those who can recall the days when wild turnips and wild oats were the bane of the cropping farmer, when fathen, wireweed and cornbind were problems for the pea grower, when ryegrass was the greatest handicap in white clover seed production, and when Californian thistle control consisted of using individual applications of sodium chlorate, will appreciate just how enthusiastic many of us were when 2,4-D burst on the scene round 1946 after the war.

It was this new concept which stimulated the planning of a conference in 1948 to be attended by manufacturers, scientists, and users at which free and frank discussion could be held.

We've come a long long way since then, with some spectacular successes such as the control of wild turnips, wild oats, fathen, cornbind, flatweeds, and grasses and some nagging failures—as for example Californian thistle and hoary cress—but overall the results from the use of the new control techniques have been quite outstanding.

For the first six years, the conferences alternated between Lincoln and Massey and then in 1954 moved to Dunedin and since then have been held at many different centres in both the South and the North Island.

In 1963—after 15 years—the Conference recognized that pests as well as weeds affected crop production and changed its name to the “N.Z. Weed & Pest Control Conference (Inc.)”, which with a minor change is its title today.

The Society is not only concerned with control of weeds and pests; it has a wider mandate and indeed has supported scientific research but has also fostered special publications on weeds and pests, and has organized special field days and demonstrations at centres throughout the country.

So far I have given something of the history of the N.Z. Weed and Pest Control Society and stressed the positive side of the contributions to weed control made by the introduction of the growth control substances but I should be failing in my responsibilities if I did not conclude by highlighting three problems which provide serious challenges to scientists and manufacturers:

- (1) There are still serious weeds for which you have not yet produced effective control procedures—need I mention barley grass, Californian thistle, and hoary cress?
- (2) The costs of control for many weeds are too high in the present circumstances where the margin between costs of production per unit and returns per unit is so narrow.
- (3) You must realize that a new factor has assumed a dominant role in recent years, and that is the preservation of the environment.

I am personally reluctant to comment on this for, as one who has been directly and indirectly a producer of primary products all my life, I applaud control of weeds and pests but as a former Chairman of the

Physical Environment Committee and a long-term conservationist, I must draw attention to the problems arising from the use of chemicals which have a long life in the air or in the soil.

On these matters it is difficult to take sides but if I must make a decision then I would come down in favour of controlled use of effective chemicals for the control of weeds and pests because I have a deep faith in the capacity of the soil and of plants to break down and adjust to unusual materials.

That has not been easy to say, but at a time when there are so many questions on which each person must make a decision then there is no place for those who are neither "for nor against" and that is the real question before you at this Conference.

I applaud your interest, your enthusiasm, your concern, and I salute your decision to debate the issues. You have a fine and comprehensive programme for the Conference and I wish you well as one who is deeply concerned with the future of mankind—a future to which you will make a much more certain positive contribution than your colleagues from the physical sciences.

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## HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

A. J. HEALY

Arthur Healy has been closely associated with the Society since the 5th Conference in 1952 when he presented a paper on "The Introduction and Spread of Weeds". Subsequently he has presented a series of papers on the identification of weed groups. These have been revised by Mr Healy and published in book form by the Society. He also put immense effort into preparing *Standard Common Names for Weeds in New Zealand* for publication. He is Assistant Director of the Botany Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research but despite his administrative and scientific duties always gives time willingly and cheerfully to all who seek to avail themselves of his unique knowledge of the naturalized flora of New Zealand.