

What the Guild is trying to do

By S. W. Andrews, Chairman

IT is now seven months since the formation of The Amateur Winemakers' National Guild of Judges, and for the Executive Committee this has been a time of great activity.

The aim has been to get a workable organisation and mechanism set up so that new members may be enrolled in the Guild with the minimum delay. I sincerely hope that as a result, there will be a number of new faces on the panel of judges for the National in 1965; but before this can happen there still remains a great deal of work to be done. Nevertheless, I am confident that with the enthusiasm and hard work of the Executive Committee, on whose shoulders the work must inevitably fall, our aim will be achieved.

The committee has now completed the draft of a handbook, which will comprise The Constitution, The Procedure for Judges, a set of model rules for wine exhibition, and a comprehensive collection of schedules for any size of show; from the single class in the village to the more complicated multiple-class show such as the National. The handbook will also contain a great deal of useful information for the exhibitor, and hints for the judges and stewards.

There has been some criticism of the way in which the Guild was formed. It has been said that the Conference Committee had no mandate to form the Guild. This, of course, is true; it is also true it had no mandate NOT to form the Guild. The fact is that a Guild would undoubtedly have been formed by some winemakers within the movement, and the Committee felt it was better to have the Guild under the aegis of the Conference Committee than to have a private venture within the movement, with inevitable duplication, and a possible schism.

It is an indisputable fact that some co-ordination of the work of judges was very necessary. There were far too many anomalies existing between the judges; some were disqualifying exhibits for minor faults in presentation, and there were differences on matters of principle. There were also many differences in the interpretation of the marking sheets, which in themselves showed a great variation.

Such irregularities lead inevitably to some criticism of the judges and of the procedure and the net result was dissatisfaction amongst the competitors. Obviously the time had come to regularise the whole question of wine adjudication. The suggestion that a Guild of Judges should be formed was put before the Conference Committee by Mr. B. C. Turner. As a result, although it was foreseen that there would probably be criticism from some winemakers, a steering sub-committee was formed to work out a plan of formation which would be acceptable to the majority.

Every aspect was fully discussed at the first meeting of the sub-committee. It was decided after giving the matter very careful consideration, to recommend that in order to be as objective as possible, the panel of judges which had been carefully selected by the Conference Committee to form the panel for the National Show in 1964, should also be asked to meet and be founder members of the Guild.

This decision in itself has been criticised but the plain fact was that we had to have a membership, that we had to start somewhere, and that we had to have a clear dividing line between "In" and "Out." This was the simplest and most clear cut method we could devise. The intention was to enlarge the membership as soon as regular means of doing so could be drawn up.

Whilst it was realised that this was not the ideal solution it was felt to be the most likely one to succeed. I suppose some criticism was inevitable. One cannot please all the people all the time; any birth is bound to be accompanied by labour pains, and the success of the

birth depends to large extent on the co-operation of the parent. However, I am sure that the majority of discerning winemakers within the movement will understand and appreciate the difficulties surrounding the formation of the Guild.

I can assure all concerned that throughout the committee stage, the formation of the Guild and the preparation of the very detailed handbook, the thought uppermost in the mind of the committee and members has been "What is going to be best for the movement?" Certainly there has been more concentrated thought and effort given to the venture by the Guild Committee than to any other organised work within the amateur winemaking movement.

I hope that when the handbook is published all who are interested in becoming judges of wine and who have the basic qualifications as stated in the handbook will sit for the examination, and through that examination apply for membership of the Guild.

The aim of the Guild is to have a large body of qualified judges domiciled in all parts of Great Britain, who will be able at any time to meet the requirements of show secretaries. In this way all competitors in wine exhibition will be assured of fair and discriminating appraisal of their exhibits.

WINE CLASSES IN N.E. CHESHIRE SHOW

In the schedule for the North East Cheshire Show this year, the Hazel Grove Horticultural Society included for the first time open classes in Amateur Winemaking.

Understandably the entries were not, by any standard, numerous (the late decision to hold the classes made advertising difficult). The Stockport Amateur Winemakers had come into existence only a short time previously and if they, for instance, had heard of the existence of the Show classes earlier the entries would have been greatly increased.

As it was, there was still time to have some publicity for the Stockport A.W. on the exhibits table which included, for display only, a gallon of Rhubarb "in full blow," and all this attracted a good deal of attention and curiosity.

The entries were judged by Mrs. J. Bailey of Winemakers' Equipment, Manchester, and Mr. C. Turner of the Manchester Wine Circle.

Mr. E. Tupman, of Stockport, tells us: "So far as the neck of the woods is concerned, the ball has been set rolling. Come next year's show there will be a great deal more interest. The initial push was more than worthwhile."