

This article was supplied by Doug Chase in recognition of the New Zealand Drillers Federations' 21st Birthday.

In 1974 drilling contractors held a series of meetings in Auckland to discuss the merits of forming an association which could give strength to the contractor in the drilling industry. Casing quality and availability, drilling rig registration and road tax and customs duty on second hand drilling rigs from overseas were just a few of the problems facing the industry.

All Drilling contractors were called to meet at the Waikato Motor Hotel on Saturday 6th July 1974. Thirty five contractors assembled that day, representing a good proportion of the drilling industry in the North Island. This first meeting was ably chaired by Colin Clare of Ancell Clare and Company, a Hamilton accountancy firm. (Colin had spent considerable time helping organise many previous meetings, and guided the fledgling Federation through the first year of its inception).

It was evident that the majority of contractors were in favour of an association, and a steering committee was elected to formulate the draft rules for incorporation. These rules were approved at another meeting on 20th September 1974. The application for Incorporation was completed on the 9th October 1974 and the New Zealand Drillers Federation Incorporation was born.

During those initial months, letters were sent out to the Drilling Contractors in the South Island and a meeting arranged at the Wellington Airport Conference rooms on April 12th 1975. Representing the South Island Drillers at that meeting were Russ Harris of A M Bisley, J M Simpson, T McMillan, J L Ford and C Woodford. In discussions on the number of potential members of the Federation in the South Island, Mr Harris estimated that there were in fact, only 12 to 15 drillers operating in the entire South Island, but he said that he was of the opinion that most of these would join the Federation.

The first conference was held in Napier under the auspices of the late Dick Baylis, and his company Baylis Bros. Ltd. Like the following conferences, it was a tremendous success. The Presidents report from the AGM in 1975, stated that many drilling contractors were "sitting on the fence", waiting to see what was going to happen. It was pointed out that in an ever changing world of new and amended laws and regulations, by Statute, Government agencies and local bodies, particularly with the advent of the Soil and Conservation Act, having the Federation recognised as a strong and recognized body, could do much for the Drilling Industry. The report ended noting that "Federation Councils in successive years can be assured of

limitless spheres to which they may apply their energies and enthusiasm”!
To which we are sure that all succeeding councilors would agree!

It is also interesting to note that the Presidents Report contained the following message to the incoming council. He said he would recommend an early start to establishing and recognising the skills of the Driller, and that this job would be immense and would take time to plan and implement! How right he was! But at least the Federation can say with pride that through the endeavors of many Council Members over the years, it now has a “Recommended Apprenticeship Scheme”. And now, in 2009, it has a New Zealand Drillers Qualification registered on the New Zealand Qualifications Authority framework by the Extractive Industry Training Organisation.

Finances were difficult in the first year and an excess expenditure over income was declared at the AGM of \$133.54, although it was noted that the convention in Napier resulted in a cash surplus of \$218.00! Registration was \$5.00 per head for men and no charge for women!

The N.W.W.A of Australia offered reciprocal membership rates of \$25.00 and members were invited to attend a N.W.W.A. convention.

The Federation Secretary Mr. Colin Clare resigned in November 1976 (his position was always of a temporary nature) and Mel Ouston took on the job of steering the new committee over the initial hurdles. His work load became so great that he had to effect his resignation in July 1991, although he continued on for another two years before quitting. 17 years is a long time in anyone’s life, and Mel is to be congratulated for all that he accomplished for the NZDF.

It was always the intention of the Federation to provide a newsletter for its members and a number of attempts were made over the years to fulfill this demand, but a newsletter and/or magazine, must have content and this did not seem to be forthcoming, each effort came to an expensive grinding halt. It has only been of recent years that by invitation of the Australian Drilling Industry Association to incorporate a New Zealand Section in their magazine, has this problem been overcome. However while there may be the machinery and a very smart magazine, articles on the N.Z. drilling scene must still be supplied and members are urged to participate in forwarding copy for inclusion to the Executive Officer.

The various conventions held in numerous places, have always been well attended and some have returned extremely good profit to the Federation. Committee members have sacrificed a tremendous amount of time to ensure

that all functions were 100% operative, from trade exhibits to morning and afternoon teas, Conference speakers and field displays, accommodation and dinners and entertainment. It is also fitting to mention the tremendous responses from our Australian neighbors, who have lent so much support over the years.

A great number of achievements can be attributed to the Federation. The NZDF as one of its first commitments in 1975, approached Catchment Boards and Regional Water Boards as well as the Standards Association of New Zealand, to bring about a more uniform modeling of the underground water by-laws.

1976 to 1978 saw a great shortage of 100mm pipe facing the industry. Throughout this time the Federation engaged in dialogue with New Zealand Steel on the question of quality and continuity of supply. After much correspondence and a number of meetings over the next three years, the Drilling Industry finally received pipe which was more acceptable for use in drilling.

The annual conferences and drilling schools were of great benefit to all who attended and drilling equipment demonstrations in the field were of extreme interest to drillers who are involved in the daily routine of engineering holes in the ground. Credit must be given to the Federation in organizing these conferences, which are of tremendous importance in keeping the driller up to date with the latest equipment.

Of equal importance, the Federation has been of help in bringing to the drilling contractor such information as

1. How to arrive at a fair charge out rate.
2. A uniform Water Well Drilling Contract Document.
3. A National Magazine.
4. A driller training course subsidised by the Government.

These are just a few of the benefits and achievements which your Federation has been instrumental and successful in bringing to the New Zealand Drilling Contractor.

In the course of the first 21 years, the Federation was proud to accord Life membership to the Gordon Brown of Rotorua Welldrilling Co Ltd, the late Dick Baylis of Baylis Bros. Ltd and the late Jack Hoffman of DSIR Wellington for their outstanding contribution.

Since then life membership has been awarded to Bill Washington of Washington Drilling and Exploration Ltd for his outstanding contributions

to the Federation and more recently life membership was awarded to the following:

- Len Brown (jnr)
- Martyn Brown
- Doug Chase
- Gordon Griffiths
- Lyell McMillan
- Stan Nicolson
- Hamish Pearson
- Hilton Prestney
- Cecil (Woody) Woodford