

MINUTE of MEETING between THE JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE and the DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE FOR SCOTLAND held in Chesser House, Edinburgh, at 2.30 p.m. on WEDNESDAY, 8th OCTOBER, 1975.

PRESENT:

JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE:

N.A.S.P.M. Messrs. R. Beeson, J. Fell, E. Sherriff and D. Smith.

S.P.T.A. Messrs. J. Fordyce, J.O. Robertson, I. Barr, T. McClung and D.H. Lindsay with Mr. R. David Hunter, the Secretary, in attendance with Mr. D. Blackmore.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: Messrs. D.C. Todd and E.R. MacDonald.

Mr. Todd occupied the Chair.

APOLOGIES. There was a full attendance and no apologies for absence were necessary.

Mr. Todd opened the proceedings by welcoming the Committee and expressing his pleasure at attending this, his first, meeting with them. He gave a brief generalised summary of the results of the 1975 Certification Scheme. Overall, the arrangements had proved satisfactory. While entered acreage had declined slightly, certified acreage was virtually the same as the previous year. Crop yield estimates varied around 1 ton per acre less than last year. Plant health appeared satisfactory, both aphids and Veinal Necrosis seeming no worse than last year, the latter no doubt reflecting the introduction of AAl grade this year. Mr. Todd also announced that the annual Crop Register was at the proof-checking stage and he hoped to complete publication by the end of October.

SEED ADMIXTURES. Mr. Fell explained that this problem was increasing over and above groundkeeper causes. The Committee were agreed this was essentially a human error which worsened as a result of increasing machanisation and use of internal storage. The S.P.T.A. had agreed to circularise its membership in this matter. Mr. Fell sought Departmental support in a publicity campaign to growers (perhaps along the same lines as the Chemical Treatments Campaign last year). Mr. Todd stated that the Department were issuing instructions and their staff were trying/



trying to ensure that the problem would be contained, adding that the Department would continue to do all it could to help.

CHEMICAL RESIDUES. Mr. Fell explained the Committee's concern on the evidence of C.I.P.C. residue in boxes, buildings etc. now known to persist for three (and possibly four) years. From his personal knowledge, Dutch interests were also seriously concerned with this same problem. Mr. Todd pointed out that the College of Agriculture had included this consideration in its advices but Mr. Sherriff stressed that the Committee were seeking additional publicity support now and for full consideration of the need to encourage specialised precision application skills for chemicals. He felt these were most applicable to C.I.P.C. and Tetracine but perhaps less so to Fusarex.

Following on from this Mr. Hunter re-called the criticism during the Committee's morning meeting that Scottish growers were not trial-testing chemicals, while the English view was that all Seed will be chemically treated within ten years. Mr. Barr felt this was largely because Scottish growers were unconvinced that claimed benefits actually ensued. Mr. Todd pointed out that College scientists' findings do not support the latter part of that view but perhaps a little more time would convince more growers. Mr. Beeson added that Northern Ireland provides grants to purchase precision application machinery and asked if the currently visiting Dutch Seed Board party had provided any light in the matter. In reply Mr. Todd explained they had come to seek information, not to provide it, but he was of the opinion, however, that the Dutch party had been impressed by Scottish chemical work. Mr. Beeson concluded the discussion by stating that buyers will pay a premium for chemically treated seed to be relieved of complaints in respect of diseases, especially at current high price levels.

EARLY VARIETIES INSPECTIONS. Mr. Barr outlined the Committee's discussions during its morning meeting and sought the Department's assistance to overcome the problem of growers having had to withdraw crops of certain rapidly-maturing early varieties (notably Javelin) from the Scheme. While the first inspection was less of a problem, it was frequently necessary to burn off before the second (foundation stock/



stock) inspection could be carried out. Mr. Todd stated the Department were aware of the problem from Inspector's reports, pointing out it was essentially staffing-based, some Inspectors being required to be withdrawn for training duties at the critical time which coincided with the academic year-end intake of seasonal staff. He enquired if the problem was limited to specific areas and if this season had been an odd one or part of a continuing trend. Mr. Barr explained it developed from a continuing search to supply the "early" market and was evident in all areas. Mr. Todd undertook to examine the matter carefully and was confident that a solution can be found.

SCOTTISH SEED QUALITY. Mr. Smith explained the N.A.S.P.M. view that the quality of Scottish seed had deteriorated over about the last three years, most noticeably last season as evidenced by an increase of 150 in the number of P.M.B. inspections for alleged faulty produce. Analysis of the inspections showed the most prevalent complaints to have been for gangrene, followed by wet rot and faulty riddling (in that order, numerically). Mr. Todd commented that the very modest cost of those inspections could partly explain the numerical increase. He had gained the impression that some of the complaints had appeared to verge on the frivolous. Mr. Smith stated that the evidence indicated that faults arose mainly in farm-dressed, not merchant-dressed, supplied and on diseases Mr. Beeson added his view that leaf roll was more prevalent in the South. Mr. Todd explained that in this year's inspections, Scottish rejections were considerably lower this year (partly due to A1 absorbing otherwise AA rejections). Withdrawals had increased markedly and while there was evidence of improved roguing and increased use of aphicides, there was still very much more leaf roll in Scotland than the Department would like.

LABEL COLOURS. Mr. Smith next explained that in several late-season instances considerable confusion had arisen from substitution of blue labels for red. Mr. Todd stated that underestimated demand had been compounded by unexpected wastage of red labels. This experience has been used in the ordering situation this year, which is well in hand, and/



and he is very hopeful that the problem will not recur.

SEED EXPORTS. Mr. Barr referred to the ban on exports of ware potatoes from 16th October and sought clarification of the requirements for the issue of licences now necessary to export seed potatoes. Mr. Todd stated that he understood the Department of Trade will issue licences automatically and immediately, on condition that the relative Plant Health Certificate will be produced to H.M. Customs and Excise at the port of loading implying "within the normal times". He did not anticipate any problems in this respect. In reply to Mr. Barr's further question Mr. Todd did not foresee the introduction of any restriction on maximum tuber size permitted for exported seed.

PLANT ROYALTY BUREAU. Mr. Sherriff initiated the discussion by stating he had been a member of the Committee whose discussions had led to the setting up of the N.S.D.O. several years ago. He was therefore surprised and anxious to learn why the state-funded N.S.D.O. required to employ the Plant Royalty Bureau, a private organisation, to collect its royalties. Mr. Todd explained his understanding was that it avoided duplication of the costs of collection, N.S.D.O. having exactly the same relationship with the Bureau as any other plant breeder. He continued with a brief outline of the meeting between representatives of the Bureau, S.P.T.A. and N.F.U.S. which he had attended on 29th September. Mr. Sherriff asked if the Department had any preference for tonnage or acreage based collection of royalties. Mr. Todd stated that the present acreage basis was the easiest for the Department. He thought that a tonnage basis would have to lean on Department resources for administration, which could raise problems regarding confidentiality of information, but the Department would co-operate if the industry wants to change over to a tonnage basis.

In reply to Mr. Hunter, Mr. Todd stated that N.S.D.O. has not surrendered its policy rights to the Bureau. Mr. Lindsay pointed out that all N.S.D.O. grower licences have been cancelled on 30th November, 1975 and Mr. Barr explained that the Trade is deeply concerned/



concerned at its lack of representation with the Bureau.

Mr. Fell stated that within the context of proposed merchant licensing the existing Bureau/Commercial links at (common)Directors level threatened possibly a closed shop situation and Mr. Sherriff recorded the very serious concern of the Committee's two constituent Associations at the situation that is clearly in prospect of emerging. SCOTTISH INSPECTORATE VISIT. Mr. Sherriff explained that the Inspectorate visits to English growing areas are a tremendous encouragement to the morale of English growers and proposed that a visit should be arranged at the end of the Scottish inspection period in future years. Mr. Todd stated he would be very happy to fit this in at the end of July/early August time. It was agreed that N.A.S.P.M. would discuss dates and locii and their Secretary would advise the Department of the arrangements as early as possible each year.

METRICATION. Mr. Fordyce referred to the introduction of metrication by producers in next year's crop and sought assurance that Departmental forms would be adapted accordingly. Mr. Todd confirmed that steps had been taken, on a "changeover lag" basis in some respects (notably area measurement) and in reply to Mr. Barr he also confirmed that label printing arrangements would be millimetric. Mr. Macdonald added that an Imperial/Metric Conversion Sheet would be issued to all registered growers with their Return Forms in December, 1975.

Mr. Todd explained he understood the Committee would be arranging supplies of Plastic Hand Guages and enquired if the Department could participate. The N.A.S.P.M. representatives undertook to send him a sample and quotation for consideration.

WARE TONNAGE MOVEMENTS. In reply to Mr. Smith's enquiry Mr. Todd stated the Department had no figures yet available to compare this season's tonnage movements into the ware market with last year. Mr. Barr suspected that Scottish movements were ahead and Mr. Smith thought that English movements were likewise, but that movements into storage there were well down.

A vote of thanks to the Chair then terminated the meeting.

*James Fordyce*