

REPORT on the MEETING of the
JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE held at
8, Manor Place, Edinburgh at 10.30a.m.
on Wednesday, 18th OCTOBER, 1978

PRESENT:

S.P.T.A. Messrs. J. H. Barr, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Henderson, D. H. Lindsay and T. McClung with R. D. Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

N.A.S.P.M. Messrs. H. N. Aves, C. J. Baker, R. J. Beeson, E. R. Sherriff and D. H. Smith.

Mr. J. H. Barr occupied the Chair.

The Chairman opened the Meeting by extending a warm welcome to the N.A.S.P.M. delegates before moving to the the first item on the Agenda.

Mr. Sherriff explained that Blackleg in 1977 Stocks had been considered during the Seed Potato Advisory Committee meeting in Northern Ireland in July and his delegates wanted to discuss the matter with D.A.F.S. later today. Mr. Barr pointed out that this disease was not necessarily seed-borne, climatic conditions having a strong bearing on its incidence. Mr. Beeson felt a firm grip should be kept on the matter to avoid complacency. Mr. Baker explained that stem cutting had not been as effective as hoped and it was agreed the Committee would press for further research into the problem, Mr. Beeson adding that Dr. Quinn of the East of Scotland College is expert in the subject.

There followed a brief discussion of Royalty Rates. Export Licences and national levy including E.E.C. and Dutch arrangements. In reply to Mr. Baker, Mr. Barr agreed the S.P.T.A. supported continuation of the present acreage basis for royalties only because it was the lesser of two evils, the alternative (merchant collectors on a tonnage basis) being much less acceptable.

Mr. Sherriff regretted that prior consultation on the next item, Seed Inspections - Damaged Tubers had not been possible and briefly explained the case which had highlighted that whereas a P.M.B. inspection covers all faults, N.A.S.P.M. inspections are confined to the particular fault complained of. His Association seeks a common basis and to this end is presently redefining damage with the P.M.B. In reply to the Chairman, Mr. Sherriff agreed to arrange for the Board's reply to be copied to the S.P.T.A. Messrs. Lindsay and Fenton agreed that the S.P.T.A., D.A.F.S., P.M.B. and M.A.F.F. were all "on the same wavelength", Mr. Lindsay quoting the 1978 Seed Regulation definition. Messrs. Beeson and Baker felt this and earlier definitions were rather loose and vague and should be updated and tightened up.

The following discussion covered RUCIP (where Article 10 did not mention damage in seed, but Article 12 clearly defined damage in ware) the need for official inspectors to be trained to trader's views; the technical negative nature of official definitions whereas the trade wanted positive, presentation definitions. Nowadays, damage most frequently occurs in transit, whereas handling damage is seldom seen. Mr. Barr asked if a change in definition is needed or simply to find a common interpretation of existing standards. Mr. Smith felt the Board had need of the traders' practical view which the NASPM delegates would now be able to give at next week's seed Potato Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Hunter pointed out that too fine a definition could create more problems than it sought to solve, whereas wider definitions gave scope for common sense decisions.

Mr. Lindsay felt the S.P.T.A. agreed "whole and substantially free", "single cuts" and "multi-centred cuts" are acceptable terms but that "crushed" and reference to sepcific varieties are not acceptable. It was felt that pathological tests could be helpful and Messrs. Baker and Beeson stressed the over-riding importance of keeping presentation criteria clearly in mind.

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Turning next to Conditions of Sale revision the Chairman explained the S.P.T.A. had formed a small sub-Committee which had met once and now awaited NASPM views. Mr. Smith reported that Counsel's Opinion had been obtained and would be considered at a further meeting, with legal advisers present, on 31st October. He explained concern with the effects of the Unfair Contract Terms Act (particularly in the absence of "test case" guidance) and "consumer interest" oriented pressures, as well as "tuber-indexing" threats which NASPM felt should be played down. Mr. Smith anticipated two more meetings would be necessary to formulate their recommendations which it was hoped could be agreed in time to become operative by 1st July, 1979.

The Chairman asked if draft recommendations were available and stressed the need to keep SPTA sales and NASPM Purchase Conditions in line. Mr. Hunter supported this view explaining that although the SPTA were not under the same pressure, the very closest possible consultation between the two Associations was essential. Mr. Baker agreed with this view and regretted that very slow progress had been made. Their Counsel is proposing to include clauses on passing of property and passing of risk.

The Chairman pointed out that slow progress could well be repeated when the recommendations came to be considered in the context of Scots Law, which raised serious doubts whether the proposed 1st July, 1979 deadline could be met. He again urged that draft recommendations be made available as soon as possible and Mr. Baker in reply hoped, but could not promise, that a Report would be made available within a calendar month.

Mr. Beeson then gave a report on NASPM talks with MAFF which had reviewed the English Certification Scheme, Burning off programme and tuber index tests (which take 12-14 weeks and the Ministry were now very aware of the problems). Less than 70 people had submitted some 150 samples under the 1978 Scheme, which aimed to detect 5% disease levels although the Certificate allows 10%. Discussions had also covered imports of foreign seed and its possible entry into the English Certification Scheme.

Mr. Baker continued by explaining that under Section 16 of the Seed Potato Regulations 1978 the English Ministry conduct inspections of each individual consignment. In reply, SPTA delegates explained DAFS inspections concentrated on dressing activities (not individual consignments) of which better than 70% were visited. Mr. Baker then reported that the Ministry discussions had indicated their intention to enforce the Section 16 provisions, including possible ban on movement and legislative action if necessary. It appeared a DAFS/MAFF meeting about 5th September had arranged for inter-checking for size and disease but not weight considerations. The Ministry had also stressed that these steps would not be applied as a normal part of the Inspection Service but as a result of a complaint which they anticipated only after usual complaints channels had failed to provide a satisfactory solution.

The Committee agreed this information could have serious implications, particularly in respect of the effect of the 14 day period on 3 days and 10 days limits for complaints in terms of the Conditions of Sale and Purchase and it was decided to discuss the point for clarification with DAFS later today.

Moving to discussion of British Rail's 1978 Bonus Incentive Scheme the Chairman explained the SPTA were to meet British Rail for discussions and as a regular large rail user his own company was in direct correspondence with them in the matter. Mr. Baker explained that, although not contained in the report of the end-May London meeting, his private conversation with Mr. Harries had disclosed that British Rail expected large users to initiate direct individual discussions.

The Chairman next outlined the problem of Riddle Sizes and labelling which, in his own view, would only be resolved through course of

of time. It was quite clear that DAFS will not issue 57mm size labels under any circumstances. The Committee agreed that economic considerations will continue to govern the situation for as long as 57mm size represents an acceptable compromise between a buyer who refuses 60mm and a seller who will not supply 55mm size.

The next item, Sealing of split bulk loads, had been placed on the Agenda as a result of an enquiry, received by SPTA from DAFS, which the Chairman explained. The Committee's discussion of the matter also covered the sealing of boxed consignments as well as certain anomalies encountered in interpretation of other related aspects of the 1978 Regulations, particularly with regard to "marketing". It was agreed to seek clarification of these matters during the afternoon meeting with DAFS.

Mr. Sherriff next explained that inclusion of the Scottish Seed Potato Symposium on the Agenda arose from correspondence received by NASPM from Mr. Runcie of the East of Scotland College. In a brief discussion the SPTA view was that the programme was very ambitious and promised to be overcrowded.

Finally, under other competent business, NASPM delegates proposed that the afternoon meeting with DAFS should include some discussion of clean planting areas and perhaps a voluntary burning off programme.

The Meeting then closed with a Vote of thanks to the Chair.