

REPORT on the MEETING between the
JOINT (NASPM/SPTA) LIAISON COMMITTEE
and the DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND
FISHERIES FOR SCOTLAND held in Chesser
House, EDINBURGH, at 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday
15th OCTOBER, 1980

PRESENT:

DAFS - Messrs. A. Edwards, C. Quinn (East Craigs) and D.C. Todd, with Mrs. Cuthbert and Miss Gardner in attendance.

NASPM- Messrs. H.N. Aves, C.J. Baker, R.J. Beeson and E.R. Sherriff

SPTA - Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.G.H. Fenton, D.H. Lindsay, J.R. McArthur and T. McClung with R.D. Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

Mr. D.C. Todd occupied the Chair.

APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence had been notified on behalf of Messrs. D.H. Smith (NASPM), A.J. Allan and J. Henderson (both SPTA)

BLACKLEG

Mr. Sherriff was pleased with the steps taken to combat Blackleg disease. While these had not all been popular in Scotland this year he felt sure they were for long term good. Mr. Todd stated that although 1980 Conditions had favoured Blackleg and about 1000 hectares had been "no graded" as in 1978, (1979 was 600 ha.) no breakdown had occurred and the overall trend had been maintained. In fact, since 1973, 90% of all crops had achieved FS standard tolerance for Blackleg.

Mr. Todd also stated that 231 crops of AA1 had been re-inspected in 1980, the majority of which had shown less Blackleg at the second inspection than had been seen at the first inspection. Mr. Edwards stated that some extra staff had been required for these additional inspections but, on an average overall basis, these additional inspections had amounted to only one extra days work for each field team.

Mr. Quinn explained there was some surprise that the 90% level had been maintained. Recalling that the 89% level of 1964 had collapsed to 28% in 1966 he felt that its restoration to 90% by 1973 and its maintenance at that level, through good years and bad, ever since reflected the value of the stem cutting programme. Such a level, however, made further improvement much more difficult. In this latter respect Mr. Todd foresaw shortening of the Inspection Scheme timescales, discussions on which were still to come. He also stated that while the overall rate of failure to achieve classification in 1980 was 4.55%, for foreign bred varieties the rate varied from 10% in some to over 30% in others.

Mr. Barr observed that many very commendable results and much encouraging information were being provided today which the Department should publish as widely as possible to project a better Press image for the achievements of the Scottish seed potato industry. In reply Mr. Todd explained that DAFS can provide the information but it does not have a professional publicity capability.

In reply in continuing discussion, Mr. Quinn stated that burning down considerably reduced the spread of Blackleg whereas pulverisation helped the spread since, like gangrene, blackleg was airborne spread. He also agreed that application of a strong concentration of sulphuric acid for burning down followed by pulverisation about ten days afterwards provided the safest anti-spread method. Mr. Baker's view was that changes in the Scheme should not be sought but much more publicity should be given to good husbandry practices, while Mr. Sherriff felt that in using "forage-chop" only methods, Scottish producers were their own worst enemies. In reply Mr. Barr pointed out that burning down is carried out in Scotland at the very peak of vigorous haulm growth (compared with a later, more senescent, stage in England) and acid is used in almost all crops. Mr. Quinn stated he knew of no research in the pipeline to provide chemical control of blackleg which, he felt would be both very expensive and commercially/

commercially non-viable, academic considerations being one thing but practicalities altogether another. Mr. Todd undertook to include the publicity/advice question in the discussions in the next meeting with the Agricultural Colleges at the end of October.

PLANTING
REJECTED
"DESIREE"

Opening discussion of the instance of Desiree seed exported from Scotland to Algeria which, after rejection there had been returned to Boston (Lines) and much of it had been planted in England, Mr. Lindsay stated this event had caused very considerable concern in the Trade. He asked what procedure would be applied should a similar situation recur.

Mr. Todd explained that, in consultation with MAFF, his Department are pressing for inspection of such consignments as imports at the port of entry. He would hope it would be possible to arrange removal and recovery of the seed labels and explained that it was not an offence under the Seed Potatoes Regulation 1978 to sell labelled seed potatoes for non-seed purposes. Exact procedures were still being finalised in continuing consultation with MAFF.

Mr. Baker expressed alarm at the implications of Mr. Todd's statement regarding sales of labelled seed for non-seed use. Discussion of this point was inconclusive, there being a generally agreed hope that the event that had occurred would not be repeated.

LIAISON
VISITS:

Mr. Todd apologised that the annual visit by DAFS inspectors to English crops had not taken place in 1980, due to a communications lapse arising out of other demand pressures on DAFS' inspection services. Mr. Sherriff stressed the value of such visits and extended an invitation to DAFS to take part in a programme to be arranged in due course for 1981. Mr. Lindsay hoped that the programme would once again try to pair some visits with nearby "sister" crops and Mr. Todd hoped that visits to crops grown from other than Scotch seed (e.g. English, Dutch etc.) could be incorporated for useful, comparative, purposes.

OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) Import Licences - Mr. Todd explained he understood NASPM were applying for licenses to import certain varieties of Dutch uncertified (i.e pre, not yet on, national or common catalogue) seed potatoes and he asked for information on NASPM's intentions. Mr. Beeson explained the applications were for small lots for planting sample screening plots, to try to overcome the substantial backlog that had built up in this respect. He gave very firm assurances that there was no intention to bypass the quarantine arrangements but Mr. Barr, supported by Messrs. Edwards and Quinn, favoured adherence to the quarantine arrangements.

(b) Planting of un-certified seed - Mr. Lindsay explained that NASPM supported S.P.T.A efforts to introduce a ban on the planting of un-certified seed in Scotland and he enquired whether there had been any change in DAFS views on the subject. While reporting no such change had occurred, Mr. Todd accepted that the matter is certainly going to have to be considered again. In reply to Mr. Beeson he also gave "off the record" indications of possible changes in the Inspection Scheme's timescales and, in reply to Mr. Lindsay, stated that necessary consultations and discussions would prevent any such changes being introduced before 1982 crop at the earliest. DAFS also felt that assessment and discussion of prospective unconventional means of propagation should be taken into account when framing necessary statutory changes.

NASPM delegates noted that FS4 and AAL Grade seed of King Edward produced bolder (and thus more saleable) ware samples and that better crop health was changing the characteristics of some varieties.

(c) Crop Register - Mr. Baker enquired the reasons for the delay occurring between crop inspections and publication of the Crop Register, compared with some other Authorities. Mrs. Cuthbert explained that computer time-sharing and printers' pressures were the main factors, the latter more so this year. She was hopeful that this year's Register would be published during the first week in November but regretted this could not be guaranteed.

(d) /

(d) "Down-labelling" - Mr. Beeson enquired whether DAFS would be prepared to issue AAl labels for seed graded FS at field inspection. Mr. Todd stated that given adequate cause (e.g. a substantial surplus and shortage ratio) it would be permissible to do so under the Regulations and individual requests could be considered. Mr. Beeson emphasized the advantages for export purposes and Mr. Aves explained that in Northern Ireland all exports are labelled A (which also helped to avoid unnecessary confusion and delays in Bank credit and guarantee arrangements). Mr. Baker did not agree the Regulations would permit this practice, while Mr. Sherriff pointed out it could defeat his own purpose (as above for example) in ordering King Edward AAl. Mr. Edwards also voiced opposition to such a practice. Mr. Todd felt the matter must be reconsidered.

Mr, Sherriff, supported by Mr. Lindsay, expressed appreciation of the usefulness of the meeting and DAFS' hospitality, whereupon the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chair.