

REPORT on a MEETING of the JOINT (NASPM/SPTA)
LIAISON COMMITTEE in 8 Manor Place,
EDINBURGH at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday,
28th OCTOBER, 1987

PRESENT: N.A.S.P.M. - Messrs. H.N. Aves, (vice P. Smith), C.J. Baker and J.B. Hollywood.
S.P.T.A. - Messrs. G.S. Brass, J.E. Cook, J.R. McArthur (vice J.H. Barr), T. McClung and K.A. McKenzie, with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

Mr. G.S. Brass (Vice President, SPTA) took the Chair and welcomed those present.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were recorded on behalf of Messrs. E.F. Sherriff and P. Smith (NASPM), and Messrs. J.H. Barr, D.H. Lindsay and J.O. Robertson (vice Mr. Lindsay) (all SPTA). Those present conveyed their best wishes to Mr. Smith for a full and speedy recovery from his present indisposition.

RHIZOMANIA: The Chairman asked NASPM representatives for information and their views on the problem of this year's discovery of Rhizomania in Eastern England. In reply, Mr. Baker stated the danger of infected seed from that source is extremely remote but the source of infection had not been traced to NFU's satisfaction. It is believed that MAFF's agreement with N.A.K. for pre- and post-crop soil testing was still being done and that Dutch exports to the U.K. were only allowed from negative fields. There had been a surprising lack of cancellation of orders response from commercial customers for Dutch seed. It was felt to be unlikely that MAFF would agree to ban the importation of unwashed produce from Holland and Mr. Baker agreed with the Chair that a reduction of the soil tolerance from 2% to 10% would not be over-helpful, since imports from Holland were always under that anyway.

In response, Mr. McKenzie reported Mr. Guy McLaughlin's assertion that MAFF was now closely monitoring all Dutch imports and that processors must now report all consignments received. This outbreak had also revived fears about Ring Rot, resulting in renewed pressure for similar testing and better briefing of the media. Mr. Aves added that replacement with alternative crops could increase the danger and the Dutch were very aware and careful because of this, although Mr. Brass was very sceptical of Dutch claims re Blackleg-free supplies. Mr. Hollywood voiced his fear that a further U.K. discovery will not be declared, while Mr. McArthur warned against over-reaction but advocated a close scrutiny of imported Dutch ware as well as seed.

Mr. Baker urged that Scotland should press its advantages. Mr. Cook pointed out that compared with Scottish seed, Dutch seed dies off sooner and thus provides a lower yield, but Mr. Baker felt trials results did not support this view, while Mr. McArthur felt trials results were always suspect.

In conclusion it was agreed to ask DAFS for the present position at this afternoon's meeting with them, but to treat the matter as low key.

CO-ORDINATION OF REGULATIONS INTERPRETATIONS: Introducing this item included in the Agenda at NASPM's request, Mr. Baker first reported on the subject of "small ware", the Thomson circular towards the end of 1986 and DAFS' unco-operative reply letter of December, 1986. No progress had therefore been achieved.

Turning to powdery scab, he accepted that it was a grey area when deciding whether a manifestation was of a cankerous form or not. Mr. Hollywood spoke to his experience (with examples) of DAFS' shoddiness/

shoddiness in this respect and the Committee agreed he should raise this matter at this afternoon's meeting with them. Mr. McArthur also felt there to be a different attitude between on-farm and grower-merchant store inspections. In conclusion, Mr. Hollywood advocated insistence that inspected bags (and/or their labels) be clearly marked to this effect.

PROPOSED
SEED
SUPPORT
SCHEME:

On behalf of SPTA, Mr. McKenzie reported yesterday's meeting of the PMB had unanimously accepted the proposals which now go forward for discussion with MAFF. He stressed the significance of something now being done about quality, tuber health and presentation. On the other hand, trigger points at 60% of the costs of production are too low to justify early burning down and removal of all Scotch Tops, although the proposals do provide equal support for seed with ware. The Chairman explained that the proposals are expected to put some confidence back into seed production, without which, as Mr. McKenzie added, the clear alternative would be further increased pressure for separate Scottish arrangements altogether.

Although not fully cognisant of the details of the proposals, NASPM representatives raised several pertinent points in the ensuing discussion. The involvement of DAFS, control over growing, trigger price pulling the market down (as in ware), disposal of removed stocks, were all seen as matters to be addressed in the "nitty gritty" fine turning process that will occur in the light of experience gained. Mr. McArthur pointed out this might require as much as ten years - the Ware Scheme is still being adjusted after thirty years. Mr. McKenzie stated the underlying purpose of the proposals is to encourage specialisation in seed growing, NOT to encourage extra planting.

In conclusion, Mr. Baker undertook to support the proposals at the next meeting of NASPM Council and to report back to SPTA thereafter.

INCREASING
VARIETIES
WITH 60mm.
GRADE:

Mr. Baker explained this Item had been included in the Agenda at NASPM's request, in response to retailers complaints of being unable to buy certain varieties graded 35 x 55mm. In summarising the brief discussion, the Chairman defined this as a purely commercial matter for which today's meeting was not the correct forum.

CONDITIONS
OF SALE:

Mr. Hunter explained his professional view of the changes which NASPM had recently made, on the basis of which SPTA Council had resolved not to adopt the same changes. In response, Mr. Baker first conveyed apologies clearly expressed by NASPM Council that prior joint discussion with SPTA had not been arranged and in reply to the Chair he undertook to ensure that a future repetition will not occur.

Mr. Baker also explained uncertainty regarding the effect of the statutory 14 days allowed for inspections of consignments on the 10 days allowed for complaints in the Conditions of Sale. The outcome of a meeting to consider this will be forwarded to SPTA in due course.

In conclusion, Mr. Baker reported that in course of revision of NASPM's Arbitration Rules consideration had been given to inclusion of Conciliation. During a brief discussion, Mr. Hunter felt this could also be well worth SPTA consideration.

A.O.C.B.:

(a) Date of Next Meeting - The Committee agreed that the lateness of today's meeting, coupled with increased pressures of other meetings and business nowadays during Smithfield Show week, militated against resumption of a second (early December) meeting. It was decided to opt for mid-October, 1988 unless a late April/early May 1988 meeting becomes desirable, NASPM remarking that costs-sharing could be borne in mind.

(b) Russet Burbank - NASPM representatives reported their Council's discussions/

discussions had suspected that DAFS had given preferential treatment to the promoters of this variety. The Committee agreed there are dangers in the present situation and its relevance to the "small ware" problem. It was decided to raise this with DAFS during this afternoon's meeting, to include Mr. Baker's suggestion that there should be acreage limitations of approved (nursery) stocks and distinctive labelling.

The meeting then closed with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.