

REPORT on a MEETING of the
JOINT (NASPM/SPTA) LIAISON
COMMITTEE in 8 Manor Place,
EDINBURGH at 10.15 a.m. on
Wednesday, 26th OCTOBER, 1988.

PRESENT: N.A.S.P.M. - Messrs. J. Stephenson, C. Baker and P. Smith
S.P.T.A. - Messrs. G.S. Brass, J.E. Cook, D.H. Lindsay and
T. McClung, with D. Blackmore in attendance.

Mr. G.S. Brass, President, S.P.T.A. took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were recorded on behalf of Messrs. H.N. Aves and G. Shattock (N.A.S.P.M.) and Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.R. McArthur and R. David Hunter (S.P.T.A.).

SCOTTISH INSPECTORS' VISIT: The Committee's discussions commenced with consideration of D.A.F.S.' Report on its Inspectorate's three and a half day visit to various sites in England from 21st - 25th March, 1988 arranged and hosted by N.A.S.P.M. and accompanied by Messrs. Smith and Baker.

Mr. Smith explained D.A.F.S. had favoured visits to growing crops but N.A.S.P.M. preferred planting time as providing opportunity to see Scottish, home-saved and other-sourced seed samples. Mr. Baker stressed that maximum effort had been made to ensure that randomly chosen visits were as impartial and concentrated as possible.

Mr. Brass reported S.P.T.A. Council's view that the Report disclosed an unbalanced view which did not accord with the experience of complaints actually received. The Report did not include information on type of container, type of storage or date of delivery in each case. Mr. Baker felt that storage was not especially critical and Mr. Smith felt D.A.F.S. would have this information. He also asked if S.P.T.A. would wish to be represented on future visits which Mr. Brass felt would be helpful, it being agreed these various points would be raised during the Committee's meeting with D.A.F.S. later today. It was further agreed both Associations would jointly urge that the number of premises visited, not the tonnage inspected, should be the main criteria in future tuber inspections.

PLANTING UNCLASSIFIED SEED:

Introducing discussion of the proposed prohibition of the planting of unclassified potatoes throughout the High Grade Seed Area, Mr. Brass felt the indications to be that such a prohibition could be in place from 1990. Mr. Baker felt loosely-worded exceptions (e.g. Earlies, S.W. Scotland, etc.) might be permitted and Mr. Brass explained S.P.T.A.'s concern on the effect on growing of protected varieties for ware in Scotland. Mr. Cook preferred that the matter should be properly discussed in depth in Scotland before finalisation, since such a ban would penalise all growers of ware in Scotland. Mr. Baker also considered the effect of such a ban on the so-called "small ware" problem, it being agreed in conclusion to seek updating clarification on these various points during this afternoon's meeting with D.A.F.S.

SEED SUPPORT SCHEME:

The Chairman asked for N.A.S.P.M.'s views on the standards modifications introduced during negotiations for introduction/

introduction of the Seed Support Scheme. Mr. Smith stated that more had been sought but it had been accepted that more could not have been obtained. Collective tolerances in particular are still regarded as too high. Expectations are that demand for Dutch seed will increase on cosmetic rather than yield criteria. The Chairman pointed out the significant differences between Scottish and Dutch soil conditions. Mr. Baker also pointed out that in grouping Skinspot, Powdery Scab, Scurf (all infective) and Scab together, Scab is the "odd one out". Subsequent discussion also covered size limits and N.A.S.P.M.'s representations to M.A.F.F. on 28th July, 1988 to clarify confusion.

"SMALL
WARE":

The Chairman explained the foregoing topics also had "small ware" implications. N.A.S.P.M. representatives reported pressure through Members of Parliament to amend Regulations in respect of the definition of "seed". S.P.T.A. representatives felt that "small ware" is becoming less of a problem but N.A.S.P.M. stated it was increasing, to the extent that in February, 1988 it changed its Rules to require its Membership to abide by Regulations. Sellers of "small ware" are therefore now in breach of those Rules and liable to expulsion from that Association. Mention was also made to an Action by M.A.F.F. to be heard in Telford Crown Court on 1st November, 1988.

CONDITIONS
OF SALE:

Introducing discussion of Conditions of Sale (included in the Agenda at N.A.S.P.M.'s request), Mr. Stephenson reported that N.A.S.P.M. had already amended 'certified seed' to 'classified seed' throughout their Conditions and had further decided to delete Conditions 4(2) and 4(3) ('uncertified seed') for Season '89 crop onwards. Mr. Brass reported that on Mr. Hunter's advice following an approach from D.A.F.S., S.P.T.A. Council had resolved not to delete these same Conditions.

Mr. Stephenson further reported that N.A.S.P.M. Council had considered a recommendation to extend the "complaints periods" in Conditions 8(5)(iii) - (short weight - presently three days) and 11 (Patent Defects - Skinspot, Gangrene and Dry Rot - presently ten days) to fourteen days in each case. Mr. Baker added that the Conditions will thus be made compatible with the "Standstill Order" period (14 days after delivery) in the Seed Potato Regulations.

For S.P.T.A., Mr. Brass pointed out that this particular point had been argued many times in the past and he had no reason to believe that his Association or the N.F.U.S. (with whom the present time limits had long been agreed) would find such extensions acceptable. Mr. Blackmore also reminded the Committee of Mr. Hunter's view in its previous meetings that the Conditions and Regulations are not required to be compatible since their respective time limits operated in different contexts for quite separate purposes.

In subsequent increasingly lively exchanges of views the arguments for change did not persuade. A point regarding a short weight bag in the middle of a pallet was vociferously rejected, while yet other views were felt to be of personal rather than N.A.S.P.M. Council origin. In summary, the Chairman felt that S.P.T.A. Council would feel no useful point could be served by following N.A.S.P.M.'s request to re-open discussion of such extensions with N.F.U.S. Mr. Blackmore also explained Mr. Hunter's misgivings on the risks arising from the increasing divergence between the two Associations respective Conditions of sale following unilateral amendments to date.

The meeting was thereupon concluded for lunch.