

REPORT on a MEETING of the JOINT
(NASPM/SPTA) LIAISON COMMITTEE in 8
Manor Place, EDINBURGH at 10.15 a.m.
on Wednesday, 31st OCTOBER, 1990.

PRESENT: N.A.S.P.M. - Messrs. J. Langlands (President), D. Scott
(Vice President), J. Stephenson and H.N.
Aves.

S.P.T.A. - Messrs. J.R. McArthur (President), R. Doig
(Vice President), J.E. Cook, J.M. Marshall
and D.Y. Stewart, Jnr., with R.D. Hunter
(Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in
attendance.

Mr. J.R. McArthur took the Chair and welcomed those
present to the meeting.

APOLOGY: Mr. Hunter intimated an apology for absence on behalf
of Mr. K.A. McKenzie (SPTA).

MINUTES: The meeting agreed that the Minutes of the
Committee's last meeting in October, 1988 were now
outdated and should be disregarded.

PROPOSED
1990 "CATCH
GRADE": Introducing the first topic the Chairman explained at
length his own understanding of the background of the
problem that led to the proposal. He felt there had been
much misinformed misunderstanding and confusion. DAFS'
statistics gathering response and subsequent rapid
abandonment of the proposal did not help matters. It was
felt that an elastic "bending" of rules, not making new
ones, would have been a better response.

Mr. Aves reported similar problems in High Grade
stocks in Northern Ireland, where it seems resistance is
diminishing and a return to clonal selection is advocated.
Mr. Doig felt that glasshouse mini-tuber production
aggravates the problem. The Chairman asked how important
the problem is to English ware growers and whether a
"catch grade" would be acceptable to them. Speaking
personally in reply, Mr. Langlands would have preferred a
flexible response. In NASPM's view it was right to oppose
the "catch grade" proposal.

Mr. Cook reported that English crispers bought 5,000
tonnes of Dutch potatoes, which he felt would become a
permanent loss to the home trade, although Mr. Doig
pointed out that the risk of Rhizomania deterred at least
one crisper from buying Dutch. Mr. Langlands stated that
crispers were small in number and quite separate from the
general trade. Mr. Aves felt that adoption of the
proposal would have created a dangerous precedent. The
Chairman regarded it as essential not to undermine English
confidence in the Scottish classification scheme and he
thanked the NASPM representatives for their views.

H.V.S.
SCHEME: The Chairman invited NASPM's views on the impact of
the Higher Voluntary Standards Scheme on the statutory
Scottish classification Scheme. In reply to Mr. Scott he
briefly outlined the HVS Scheme which he summarised as
more disciplined burning down, but voiced the fear that
its provisions are intended ultimately to be incorporated
into the statutory scheme.

Mr./

Mr. Langlands' view was that rather than provide a premium for the producer as postulated, the HVS Scheme would depress all else to a discount which view, he understood, is widely held in Scotland. Mr. Doig was of this same view, preferring special standards to be directly negotiated between buyer and seller. Mr. Langlands also felt that compulsory early burning down in Scotland would encourage customer confidence but, citing a recent survey, Mr. Scott stated that many English customers are unaware that separate E1, E2 and E3 grades even exist. The Chairman felt this required an educative programme which the SSPDC should undertake. Mr. Cook supported the concept of the HVS Scheme but, since human error cannot be eradicated, justified complaints could topple the scheme.

Mr. Langlands also felt that the HVS Scheme should not be thrown out or ignored, since any initiative to improve quality in the whole industry is a good selling point. Mr. Langlands also pointed out that most complaints concerned mechanical damage which early burning down, leading to longer in-soil curing, would reduce but Mr. Stewart explained that stipulated "harvest by" and "in store by" dates would cancel this out. The Chairman felt that by moving away from total control towards more commercial control the trade is beginning to make more sense and Mr. Scott added that the two Associations should be able to assist this process.

CONDITIONS
OF SALE:

(a) Extension of complaints period - Mr. Scott explained the point of view of the customer gives rise to pressure for change to uniformity of the Conditions of Sale with the "legal" position but Mr. Hunter again emphasised that a fourteen day period within which the Ministry will examine consignments is not a statutory requirement but simply one of convenience. Mr. Scott felt it would also be logical to comply with law and Mr. Hunter stressed the law does not stipulate a fourteen day period for complaints. Mr. Aves reminded the Committee that RUCIP Rules provide much longer periods for complaints.

Mr. Stephenson stated that NASPM strongly favoured extension to a fourteen day period (which the Chairman pointed out would entail a price adjustment) and Mr. Langlands explained that the NFU had agreed a week ago to press the NFUS to agree to a fourteen day period. The Committee agreed to await the outcome. The Chairman felt that pressure should be directed through DAFS to MAFF not to inspect outwith commercially binding time limits for complaints.

Although not recently discussed by SPTA, Mr. Cook felt it should also press NFUS to agree to extend to fourteen days. Mr. Hunter expected this would be considered at the next meeting of the SPTA Council, adding that unlike NASPM, many SPTA Members are also significant producers.

(b) Arbitration procedures - In reply to the Chair, Mr. Stephenson explained that having sought advice from the Institute of Arbitrators, NASPM was considering moving towards single Arbitrators selected from a short list of trained people. Mr. Hunter explained the procedure for SPTA Arbitrations, which was followed by a general discussion. It was agreed that multi-party disputes were presently problematical. Mr. Hunter supported the concept for one single Arbitration involving all parties in a chain of transactions and felt this could be investigated. Mr. Langlands exemplified GAFTA procedures and Mr. Scott asked for a copy of SPTA procedures to be sent to him.

Mr./

RUCIP
RULES:

Mr. Aves explained that arising from dormancy of the British Potato Trades Consortium, seed and ware exporting and importing Members of NASPM had become disadvantaged in respect of RUCIP Rules. With some 20 supporters and NASPM Secretarial support meantime, a British Union of Potato Associations has been initiated to gain access to RUCIP arrangements by applying for membership of the European Union of Wholesale Potato Trades. The Union has indicated that such an application will be favoured. Mr. Aves is acting as Chairman and delegate of the British Union and he undertook to keep everyone informed of developments as they occur.

Mr. Langlands pointed out that the Consortium had dealt with other matters besides RUCIP and that 20 members will not be representative of the whole British trade. He regards it as essential to move strongly towards a British Potato Trade Association to protect Merchants, just as the NFU protects growers, possibly with sub-Committees for seed, ware, processing and packing interests.

The Chairman agreed a need for something clearly exists and although radical, Mr. Langlands' views merit a lot of careful thought. He confirmed that today's meeting will be reported upon to the next meeting of SPTA Council.

The Chairman thanked the NASPM representatives for their frank and workmanlike contribution to a useful and enjoyable meeting. Mr. Langlands responded by reciprocating these views and recording appreciation of SPTA's hospitality. It was also tentatively agreed that the Committee will meet again during the Ingliston Event in early February, 1991.

The meeting concluded with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.