

SESSION 10

DISCUSSION

The organization of weeds research and extension in each State was outlined by State representatives. In most States research and extension were principally the responsibility of the Departments of Agriculture which are also responsible for the administration of noxious weeds legislation. In Victoria, the Department of Crown Lands and Survey was responsible for investigational work on weeds, declared noxious, the Department of Agriculture for work on weeds of agricultural land, and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission for work on weeds of irrigation channels. In Queensland, weeds investigations were handled through the Department of Agriculture and Stock, the Department of Public Lands, and the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations, all of which were represented on the Noxious Plant Subcommittee of the Stock Routes Co-ordinating Board which, in turn, is responsible for noxious weeds legislation. All States relied on local government authorities either directly or indirectly to enforce noxious weed legislation.

Investigations of weed problems in forestry and silviculture were carried out by Forestry Departments in each State. Road Boards, Electricity authorities and other semi-government departments investigated weed problems when the occasion demanded. Universities, from time to time, had post-graduate students conducting weeds investigations or related studies.

There were relatively few State officers devoting full time to weeds research or extension. In Queensland, there were six officers employed by the Department of Public Lands on research on biological control. In the Biological Branch of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, there were four officers part time on weeds research, and similarly three officers in the Horticultural Branch.

There was one weeds officer in New South Wales who spent 95% of his time on administration. Some district agronomists do part time research on weeds.

In Victoria, there was only one full time weeds officer in the Department of Agriculture, but some research was carried out at field stations. In the Lands Department, there were three officers engaged full time on weeds research and administration. There was one officer wholly employed on weeds research in the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

In South Australia, the Weeds Research Officer spent only a quarter of his time on weeds research. There were 5 field officers who carried out weeds work in addition to other extension duties.

There was one officer full time on research and three others with both weeds research and extension duties in Western Australia.

Tasmania had one full time officer and two officers part time on weeds research.

In all States field and extension officers gave advice on weed control and most research stations did some weeds work as part of their normal research programme.

C.S.I.R.O. had fewer officers devoted to weeds research than before the war. In the Division of Plant Industry there were one Research Officer and two Technical Officers full time on weeds research. However, most of this work was devoted to ecological aspects, particularly competition studies, rather than to direct weed control. In addition there was one Research Officer working in collaboration with the New South Wales University of Technology on plant toxicological studies, and one officer, stationed at Griffith, concerned with the evaluation of new herbicides, particularly on aquatic plants. The Division of Entomology had one officer part time on the biological control of weeds by insects. C.S.I.R.O. regional stations such as Merbein, of necessity, were engaged on local weed control investigations.

Credit was given to the substantial contribution made by private industry in carrying out field trials on new herbicides. In some cases much of the work done by State Departments would not have been possible without their help.

There was some discussion on the organization of weeds research in New Zealand. Although the national conferences on weed control held in New Zealand had done a good deal to make the public weed conscious, similar conferences would not be satisfactory in Australia. This was largely due to the smaller size of N.Z. and in particular to the possibility of farmer attendance in that country.

Arising from remarks made at the opening session there was further discussion on the future of State Weeds Co-ordination Committees, most of which had had few or no meetings since their inception. They had been established originally at the request of the Standing Committee on Agriculture to define the important weeds problems in each State, the work being co-ordinated and allocated among all other interested organizations including C.S.I.R.O. in order to prevent overlapping. C.S.I.R.O. had been given the job of carrying out research on important weed problems common to two or more States. Although these committees had served a useful purpose in defining the major weeds problem it appeared that they had outlived their usefulness. The

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Conference felt that consideration should be given to the formation of a National Weeds Committee composed of State and Commonwealth Weeds Officers. It was believed that one meeting of a National Committee could accomplish as much as or more than six meetings of State Committees.

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