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PLANT QUARANTINE
Publicity Campaign Emphasises its Importance

ONE of the lesser-known activities of the Commonwealth Department of Health is the Plant Quarantine section which by its unobtrusive efforts has been able to safeguard Australian farms, orchards and gardens from many of the plant pests and diseases which have become serious scourges in other lands.

Unless constant vigilance is maintained at ports and airfields, infected plants or other materials could easily be introduced into Australia and result in the widespread dissemination of pests or diseases which could wipe out some of our primary industries unless they were controlled by costly campaigns.

In order to enlist the support and cooperation of the travelling public, and to give farmers a better understanding of the work that is being carried out, Plant Quarantine displays have recently been staged at the Royal Shows in all the capital cities of the Commonwealth.

These displays were designed to be readily demountable and the basic stands were made from half-inch hexagonal alloy rods in 30-inch lengths. The rods, joints and accessories were transported from city to city in a light three-ply box measuring 31in. x 12in. x 11in.

When assembled, the rods created three-dimensional space frames in which pictorial and other display material was suspended by means of fine wire. The illusion thus created of display pieces floating in space, especially when first seen from a distance, added to the eye-arresting appeal of the display.

As an aid to flexibility and mobility, in assembling a display plant to tour five capital city shows within three months, the exhibits were confined as far as possible to pests and diseases that have been kept out of Australia. Complementary support for this general national propaganda line was provided by the now
familiar “Don’t be a Carrier” and “Will Your Baggage Pass the Test” posters of the campaign, which is sponsored by the Australian Agricultural Council. Photographs of quarantine inspections and examinations were also used.

Australia is most fortunate in being free from some of the world’s worst pests and diseases of plants; so the organisers of this show display series had some interesting material to choose from. The exhibition subjects included:

Fire Blight of Apples and Pears—Ask any Australian apple grower if he would like to have “Fire Blight” in his orchard. He knows what a scourge it could be here, as it has been in North America and New Zealand, where it has wiped out apple and pear orchards and involved fruitgrowers in continuous expense to control it.

Citrus Canker—An authority has described Citrus Canker as the world’s worst disease of citrus. In overseas countries, millions of trees have been destroyed by it and in measures to eradicate it. The disease is very difficult to control. America spent two and a half million dollars and destroyed four million trees to rid Florida and the Gulf States of Citrus Canker.

Boil Smut of Maize—Are you interested in growing maize or sweet corn? Australia is lucky in not having to contend with Boil Smut or with Stewart bacterial disease of these crops. Both of these scourges could be imported with maize or sweet corn.

Enemies of Potatoes—Black Wart and Ring Rot are overseas diseases that are most destructive of potato crops. There is also the Colorado Potato Beetle which is a damaging pest in North America and Europe. These are three good reasons why Plant Quarantine cannot allow potatoes to be imported from abroad.

Narcissus Fly—This is a very serious pest of bulbs and is present in most of the bulb-importing countries overseas. It attacks many popular bulbous plants including the daffodil.

Oriental Fruit Fly—This insect pest, one of the world’s worst, entered the Hawaiian Islands during World War II. Joint action has been achieved by the Australian and New Zealand Governments with the United States Government to try to check its spread. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has made inspectors available at Honolulu for pre-flight examination and for treatment of all aircraft before taking off for Australia.

Japanese Giant Snail—This is another war legacy. It spread to parts of New Guinea, but so far has been kept out of continental Australia. Our alert quarantine officers have at times intercepted live specimens in ships’ cargoes, and show patrons who saw the real shell on display could easily imagine what a feast the pest would have in an Australian home garden or market garden crop.

Sirex Wasp—Australia’s developing pine forests are proving a valuable national asset, providing essential housing, furniture, case-making and plywood needs, as well as sustaining a large employment force. If the Sirex wood wasp got into these forests it could devastate them as it has done large areas in New Zealand. That is why Plant Quarantine checks all imports of softwood timber.

The story of these pests and diseases of plant life was told simply and strikingly in the recent Royal Show series.

So as to attract the greatest number of people possible and to teach the most in the least time, audio-visual aids were used effectively in combination with the bright and modern mounting devices.

Adapting the Continental exhibition technique of applying sound to a particular exhibit, “The Talking Tree” told the story of Citrus Canker in a way which was sure to give even the most disinterested passerby some inkling of Plant Quarantine activity. There is ample evidence, however, that many busy show patrons tarried—and at least heard the whole story.

Another popular feature was an Ampro Repeater Projector in which the campaign film “NOT WANTED ON VOYAGE” was screened, with sound, at frequent intervals. The screenings, which produced a vivid image, day or night, on the machine’s self-contained television-like screen, never failed to gain an instant audience.