

## Virus-free potatoes produced in Pemberton

Pemberton, British Columbia, western North America's major source of virus-free potato stocks, is virtually the only source of virus-free seed on the continent. Pemberton seed potatoes, considered the highest quality, are a million-dollar industry.

"Pemberton is the mecca of the seed potato industry," said Bud Wright, potato specialist and head plant pathologist at the Agriculture Canada Vancouver Research Station. "We think we have some pretty fascinating facilities and work going on here, and we know that it's getting international attention," he said.

When designated 'virus-free' it means the tubers are almost totally free of harmful pathogenic viruses. "That means they're of the highest possible quality and, to the producer, it also means a much higher crop yield," said Dr. Wright.

The Pemberton valley, surrounded by mountains and wilderness, is considered an

ideal location for developing virus-free crops. Its natural isolation prevents contamination from outside sources.

In 1967, provincial legislation required all potatoes planted in the area to be grown from seed produced in the area. The regulations outlined the varieties that could be grown, sanitary practices and crop rotation.

Agriculture Canada's Vancouver Research Station scientists and the Pemberton seed potato growers maintain the virus-free quality seed potatoes through new virus eradication techniques that include heat therapy and meristem culturing. They are complemented by strict planting and management practices on the part of the farmers.

Today, there are 18 seed potato growers in Pemberton with virus-free operations. This amounts to about 200 hectares of seed potatoes, averaging about 37 000 plants to the hectare and yielding about 30 tonnes of seed potatoes per hectare.

Producers receive about \$225 per tonne.

Pemberton seed potatoes are sold mostly to US producers in Idaho, Oregon and Washington and to Canadian producers in Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia.

### International contacts

Dr. Wright and his colleagues are increasingly being contacted by other countries interested in producing their own virus-free seed potatoes.

"This is because virus-free seed will yield somewhere in the order of 20 to 30 per cent above non virus-free potato crops," said Dr. Wright.

Pim Sanderson, a New Zealand plant pathologist who visited Pemberton, said they are now "in the process of developing a similar potato scheme" in New Zealand. Lorie Ewing, a researcher developing a nuclear seed potato program in Moscow, Idaho, has also toured the Pemberton valley. He said it was important to see the procedures that are carried out in Pemberton and how they can be applied to the state of Idaho.

## Memorabilia of Papal visit donated to national depositories

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has donated the records from the Secretariat created to organize Pope John Paul II's visit to Canada in September 1984 to the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) and one of the two "popemobile" trucks built specifically for the Pope's use on his Canadian tour to the National Museum of Science and Technology (NMST).

As the headquarters for the Papal visit to Canada, the Secretariat acted as the liaison between dioceses, governments and the Vatican. Included in the documents transferred to the PAC were correspondence, draft travel itineraries and speeches for the Pope, as well as official speeches and programs. A complete copy of televised video tapes, posters and various maps and plans were also donated.

Other documents still being used by the conference, like financial records, will be transferred to the PAC at a later date.

Victorin Chabot, chief of the French Archives Section and responsible for documents pertaining to the Catholic Church, said that "from a research point of view these records are an important addition to the Public Archives, as they document a major event in twentieth-century history of the Canadian Catholic Church".

The popemobile was donated to the NMST as the conference "wanted one of the popemobiles preserved in Canada", said museum spokesman Ernie DeCoste. The

other vehicle is expected to be sent to Rome.

The white pick-up trucks, topped with bullet-proof, glassed-in domes, were designed to protect Pope John Paul from poor weather and possible assassins. They were designed and built by Pierre Thibault Trucks, a company that manufactures fire trucks in Pierreville, Quebec. Components and funds were donated by several Canadian com-

panies and organizations and the Quebec government. The total cost of each truck was \$130 000.

The agreement with the museum states that "the popemobile will not be used for the transportation of other dignitaries and will be reserved for the Pope, should the occasion arise". The museum will preserve the popemobile and display it in the section reserved for antique vehicles. They will also attempt to display it across Canada.



One of two popemobiles used during Pope John Paul's visit to Canada in September 1984 was donated to the National Museum of Science and Technology.