

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXPORT
COMMITTEE of the SCOTTISH POTATO
TRADE ASSOCIATION held in the Station
Hotel, Perth, at 3.30 p.m. on FRIDAY,
13th SEPTEMBER, 1974.

PRESENT: Messrs. J. Fordyce, I. Barr, A. Cumming, D. Lawson, R.A.
McLean, G.P. Matheson and J. Warnock, along with Mr. R.
David Hunter, the Secretary with Mr. D.I. Blackmore in attendance.

Mr. I. Barr as Convenor occupied the Chair and welcomed the members present.

APOLOGIES. The Secretary reported that apologies for absence had been received from Messrs. A.C. Galbraith and J.O. Robertson.

The Secretary reported that at the morning meeting with the Joint Liaison Committee in London on Wednesday, 26th June, 1974 that Committee agreed with the views expressed by this Association through the members of its Export Committee present there.

He further reported that, at a meeting in the afternoon of that same date between that Committee's representatives (including from our own Export Committee) and the Ministry of Food, the following points emerged:-

1. No compensation for financial losses incurred by Exporters as a result of the ban on export of ware potatoes introduced in February, 1974 would be paid. It had been explained that it was an absolute rule that governmental actions within their power attracted no compensatory financial liability.
2. Under European Economic Community Rules a member country ban on exports automatically permits imports into that country from other member countries.
3. There was no possibility of devolution to Scotland of separate powers /

powers governing exports.

4. So far as 1973/74 statistics were concerned the figures for actual exports up to the introduction of the ban had been accurate. The figures for forecast exports, however, (on which the ban had been based) had been hopelessly false.
5. Future bans on exports would be subject to circumstances but, to alleviate hardship and difficulties, the Ministry were considering the introduction of a system of (i) open export licences to be followed later in the Season by (ii) Quota restrictions thereof, if necessary. There had been discussion of how best to allocate any such quota and a proposal that in a normal crop year a minimum guaranteed availability of 100,000 tons be notified by the end of August each year, such minimum not being guaranteed of course in any abnormal year.
6. It had been anticipated that a further similar meeting with the Ministry would be held about the end of July. The Secretary reported that such meeting had yet to be announced.

Mr. McLean stated that his impression of the June meeting had been that it had been instructive only, and not consultative.

The Chairman felt that from the report, the purpose of today's meeting was first to discuss the Licences, Quota and Guaranteed minimum proposals. During the following general discussion Mr. Fordyce stated that his information was that the Potato Marketing Board seemed to agree that the proposed guaranteed minimum would make no difference to the domestic market. Mr. McLean stated that our representations should emphasise the dangers arising from the ban opening the way to imports from the continent, it being his view that prices should be allowed to control supplies.

The Secretary reported that provisional statistics for the 1973 crop buying /

buying programme to hand from the Potato Marketing Board showed that end of season compensation totalling £3,381,000 had been paid on a total of 179,035 tons. The Government's share was shown as £486,000 in respect of 40,000 tons.

Mr. Cumming pointed out that the principal problem would seem to be to improve the accuracy of the information underlying future decisions and he felt this to be of some urgency, since he understood the Ministry was already considering the introduction of another ban for the 1974 crop. Mr. Fordyce suggested that this understanding was based on provisional crop estimates but some revision would be required to take account of the better "bulking up" of the crop since the provisional estimates were drawn up. In Mr. Barr's view the figures for crop and consumption were probably now in balance but he doubted whether 1974/75 exports would exceed 95,000 tons.

Returning to support Mr. McLean's last observation Mr. Mathieson pointed out that, in some respects, the situation facing the trade was parallel with the situation that recently faced Tate and Lyle. Mr. McLean thereafter proposed that the Secretary should press for a further meeting with the Ministry (in view of the nonoccurrence of the formerly anticipated end-July meeting) and with the support of Mr. Cumming proposed that such meeting should aim first at the setting up of a consultative body.

Mr. Barr felt that the Ministry open licences proposals were intended as a first (registrational) step towards providing an accurate statistical basis for future decisions. As such he felt the proposal should be supported and the Committee agreed.

Referring again to the suggested consultative body, which he envisaged as having a primarily liaison function, Mr. McLean felt that representatives of this Association's Export Committee would represent all Scottish interests. In this light it was felt that Irish interests would be covered /

covered by the inclusion of representatives from the Northern Ireland Board and Mr. Barr explained that such steps should be channelled through the Consortium and should include Mr. Douglas Smith. Mr. Cumming suggested that Mr. Gordon Lyall of the Department should also be included and Mr. McLean also recommended inclusion of Potato Marketing Board representative.

The Secretary confirmed that he would contact the British Potato Trades Consortium with these proposals and asking that their Mr. Douglas Smith arrange a further afternoon meeting with the Ministry preceded by a morning meeting of the Consortium to finalise the proposals for setting up a consultative committee.

Mr. Barr proposed that this Committee should be represented at these proposed meetings by the same representatives that attended the June meetings while Mr. Cumming felt that it was important that representatives, at both Association and Consortium level, should be actual exporters. Mr. Barr and the Secretary explained that, since the arrangements were to be made through the Consortium and that this Association's official representation in the Consortium rested in its President and Vice Presidents, they felt this ought to be maintained at this initial stage.

P.M.B. EXPORT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

The Secretary explained the background to the setting up of this Committee and Mr. Barr also explained his own position as this Association's representative on it and the subsequent inclusion of a second alternative Association representative. He called for nominations for recommendation to this Association's Administrative Council for adoption to represent this Association on the P.M.B. Export Development Committee for 1974 - 75. Following discussion Mr. Mathieson proposed and Mr. McLean seconded the nomination of Mr. David Lawson and Mr. Cumming, seconded by Mr. Fordyce, proposed the nomination of Mr. R. A. McLean. Both nominees accepted /

accepted and the Secretary noted to inform the Administrative Council.

A.O.C.B.

In reply to Mr. Cumming the Secretary confirmed that Minutes of this Meeting would be circulated to the Association's Export Committee Members.

Mr. Mathieson indicated that some interest was being shown in the idea of the formation of an Export Group within the Membership of the Association. It was accepted that membership of such a group would incur a larger membership fee for such group members and could provide for the group to have its own Chairman. The Export Committee did not discuss this idea.

On the proposal of Mr. Mathieson a vote of thanks to the Chair was passed and the meeting closed.