

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION held
at the Station Hotel, PERTH at 11a.m.
on Friday, 10th MARCH, 1978.

PRESENT: Messrs. J. H. Barr, D. H. Lindsay, J.G.H.Fenton, A. J. Allan, G. Brass,
J. P. Deuchar, J. Cook, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, B. Fulton, J. Henderson,
J. R. McArthur, D. Maxwell, J.O. Robertson and A. D. Williamson with
D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.
The President, Mr. J.H. Barr, occupied the Chair.

APOLOGIES: Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies on behalf of J. George, W. Gordon, T.
McClung, J. M. Waddell, J. Wardlaw and R. David Hunter (Secretary).

MINUTES: The Minute of Meeting of Council held at Perth on 22nd February, 1978
(a copy of which had already been sent to each member of Council) was
taken as read. It was formally approved and signed to this effect by
the Chairman.

MATTERS
ARISING: (a) Comparison of Dutch and U.K. tolerances Mr. Blackmore reported
(b) Pilferage on Rail that replies were awaited to the two (delayed) letters written to the
Department and to British Rail.
(c) Consortium Expenses. He also reported that the Association's share
of Consortium expenses had been finalised and invoiced at £158.42 and
settlement had now been made.
(d) FEOGA Grants. He further reported a telephone conversation with
Mr. Matheson of the Department who had explained the present position
and agreed to forward a copy of proposals relevant to potatoes. These
had not yet come to hand.
(e) Credit Charges. Mr. Blackmore next reported the Secretary's
views on Members' use of credit charges when invoicing. This led on
to discussion of the Association's Conditions of Sale and it was agreed
the matter be included in the remit to the proposed sub Committee to
be formed once views come to hand from NASPM.
(f) Membership and Subscriptions. Mr. Blackmore next reported the
present position regarding Subscriptions received and still outstand-
ing. No replies had yet been received to instructed invitations sent
out. He also reported advice from the P.M.B. that Rootcrop Ltd.,
Dunfermline had applied for a Ware Merchant's licence and Council knew
of no grounds to oppose this application.
(g) Proposed new Promotion Association. This matter was deferred, to
be dealt with as a separate item later on the Agenda for today's
meeting.

SCOTTISH
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE: Mr. Lindsay next reported on the Meeting of this Committee which he
had attended in Edinburgh on 2nd March, 1978. It had been reported
that the average ware price during the current season up to 27th
February was £38.50 per tonne and the Ministry would not allow release
of supplies contracted to the P.M.B. until the average price neared
the support price. This had been followed by a review of the then
current prices. It had also been reported, with regard to the
processors support Scheme, that the Board had no option but to accede
to the Ministry's request to operate the scheme formulated by the
Ministry with the processors. The latter had to compete with
imported products manufactured from cheap continental supplies while
being prevented, by extension of the ware import ban, from being able
to buy from that source. The motives of the scheme were to reduce
the threat to 6000 jobs reported at risk, to save government and other
support costs and to preserve the processor outlet for the home potato
producers. The Committee was assured the scheme will be carefully
monitored.

At 22nd February, 1978 the Board's support buying programme in Great
Britain was reported to have been (in thousands of tonnes) (Scottish
figures in brackets):-

Offers - 1,086 (367): Inspected - 536 (123): Contracted - 373 (98)
to be inspected and available - 267 (40)
to be inspected, but awaiting extraction of seed content - 234(191)
Withdrawals/

Withdrawals (63,000 tonnes) were increasing rapidly, indicating that not all outstanding would be contracted. Stockfeed orders were 18,000 tonnes (5,500 in Scotland) and sales back of 27,000 tonnes (10,000 in Scotland), whereas orders for the former had exceeded 600,000 tonnes in both 1970 and 1971 buying programmes. Free stocks (excluding offered but not contracted) were approximately 400,000 tonnes and being loaded at a rate of about 90-95,000 tonnes each week.

The end-January Stocks census had indicated 1.905m. tonnes of ware stocks (18% less than comparable 1974 season figures). After allowing for lower current wastage and consumption rates, the current surplus out-turn was now estimated to be approximately 225,000 tonnes. Again comparing with 1974, home crop movement was estimated to be 18% less and consumption from all sources 14% less, Mr. Lindsay explaining that garden supplies and farm gate sales were undoubtedly distorting these latter figures.

The Committee also learned that (then) current Continental prices were (vaguely) in the range of £13 - £17 per tonne in Belgium, £19 - £23 per tonne in Germany and about £26 per tonne in Holland (bags in, ex warehouse). (Then) current figures for Scottish seed movements to England and Wales (127,395 tonnes, compared with 124,563 tons last Season) while Exports had also been reported as 6,685 tonnes of ware from England, 2,237 tonnes of ware and 25,546 tonnes of seed from Scotland.

There had been a long discussion of 1978 crop prospects in which the Board had counselled strongly against overplanting the planned target of 172,000 hectares. Announcement of support arrangements were expected to be much delayed and it was envisaged that producers must carry a larger share of support costs. In these lights the excess acreage levy had been fixed at £135 per hectare.

In discussion of Mr. Lindsay's Report Council also considered the 1978 Ware Standard and the future of the P.M.B. in relation to the proposed NFU/PMB Scheme, which led also to questions of continental planting intentions and conditions, revision of one-year only transfers of basic acreage quotas and further discussion of the processors support scheme.

FUTURE
SCOTTISH
POTATO
INDUSTRY:

Introducing the next item on the Agenda the Chairman also referred to a discussion lunch by himself and Mr. Lindsay with Mr. Barclay Forrest (as Chairman of the Working Party of the Proposed new Scottish Seed Potato Producers Association) and the subsequent reply letter from Mr. Sandilands as NFUS Secretariat for the Working Party. Mr. Barr explained his view that our Association must now decide whether sufficient Member support for the proposed new Association would be forthcoming.

From the following lengthy discussion Council agreed that the views of all Members of SPTA should be obtained by means of an Open General Meeting and/or a postal poll. It was also agreed that the Meeting /Circularisation seeking those views would base upon the pre-conditions that the SPTA would have not less than 50% of the voting power on the governing body of the proposed new Association and that ^{the new} Association's objectives and activities would be confined to promotion and public relations.

After further discussion it was left to the Chairman and Secretariat to arrange the most convenient date and venue of such an Open Meeting and to compose a Circular letter calling it, as also jointly to compose a circular letter and questionnaire to be sent to all Association members if necessary thereafter.

ANY
OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

Due to pressure of time this last item of the Agenda was deferred until the next meeting of Council, the date of which in turn was deferred until the above Open Meeting and circularisation arrangements had been completed.

The Meeting thereupon concluded with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

John H. Barr