

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION held
at the Station Hotel, PERTH at 12.30p.m.
on TUESDAY, 11th APRIL, 1978.

PRESENT: Messrs. J. H. Barr, D. H. Lindsay, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Cook, J. P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, J. R. McArthur, T. McClung, D. Maxwell, J. M. Waddell and A. D. Williamson with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

The President, Mr. J.H. Barr occupied the Chair.

APOLOGIES: The Secretary intimated apologies on behalf of Messrs. A. J. Allan G. Brass, B. Fulton, J. George, W. Gordon, J. Henderson, J. O. Robertson and J. Wardlaw.

MINUTES: The Secretary apologised that copies of the Minute of Meeting of Council held at Perth on 10th March, 1978 had reached Council members by post only this morning. The Minute was taken as read and, being formally approved, was duly signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(a) Comparison of Dutch and U.K. disease tolerances. The Chairman read the full text of a reply received from the Department of Agriculture, highlighting the complexity of the subject and pointing out that the published table, being subjective rather than objective, though not strictly accurate was very difficult to refute. Council agreed that no further action could be profitably taken and, in reply to a suggestion, that copies of the correspondence would not be circulated to Members.

(b) Pilferage on British Rail. The Secretary read a brief letter from the Scottish General Manager advising that the matter was being referred to Mr. Harries, Scottish Freight Manager, for attention. Further word is awaited.

(c) Membership and Subscriptions. Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of a formal letter of resignation from C.W.S. (Scottish Region) Glasgow, reducing the total membership Roll to 118. In reply to five authorised invitations sent out, only Fifegrow Ltd., Cupar, had submitted a formal application to join the Association. Council accepted this application as from today's date, thus restoring the total Roll to 119 members.

He also reported receipt of five more Subscriptions from Members amounting to £207 (equivalent 1977 figure, including the resignation referred to, was £240). Altogether 100 members (84.75%) had now paid £3,783.50 (comparable with £3210 in 1977), leaving 18 members (14.25%) (who paid £560 last year) unpaid. Since 1978 subscriptions became due almost three months ago, Council instructed that individual reminder letters be sent to these 18 unpaid members.

SEED
POTATO
ADVISORY
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Lindsay next reported on the Meeting he had attended in London on 29th March, 1978. After disposing of the formalities of the first five Items of its Agenda, the meeting had considered the announced increases in rates of Royalties on N.S.DO varieties and decided that, in view of the small increases, no objection would be made. It was also learned that Spanish importers had protested to their government regarding the monopoly created by the NSDO/Matutano Agreement. Seed movements were also reported, followed by discussion of the Certification Schemes, aphid situation, ban on sale of uncertified seed and possible ban on planting on uncertified seed. It was interesting to note that Dr. Hardie had experienced the worst ever year for disease in his Department's high grade stocks. Mr. Sinclair had also reported on the export situation and this had led on to provision of detailed arrangements for the Committee's visit to Northern Ireland from 25th to 28th July next, in respect of which Council formally approved Mr. Lindsay's participation as the Association's official representative.

He/

He also reported briefly on discussion of English and Welsh matters before drawing Council's attention to various articles in the monthly issued P.M.B.'s Scientific & Technical News Letter which he felt would be of much interest to Association Members. Council agreed these should be listed in the next Association circular and that a request be made for extra copies of "S. & T. News Letter" in future for circularisation to Association Members.

Finally the Committee had learned that the Board had received 455 complaints, 64% of which proved justified after investigation; the proposed sale of "Drayton" stock by public auction at Stirling; the addition of variety "STRATH" to the National List from 1st November, 1977 but specifically for Export only. In conclusion Mr. Lindsay recounted that, in writing to intimate Mr. Forrest's apology for absence, not only did Mr. Sandilands use the opportunity to indicate that the SPTA seemed likely to become responsible for abandonment of the Promotion Association initiative, but the Committee's Chairman (Mr. McFarlane) chose to read out the whole of that letter.

During Council's discussion of Mr. Lindsay's Report Mr. Barr explained, with regard to Royalty rates increases, that the subsequent meeting of the British Potato Trades Consortium had decided to leave any action in the matter to individual constituent Associations. Council therefore agreed the Association should write to NSDO protesting against any increase and to include a request for an explanation of the most unusual course of adding their variety "Strath" to the National List specifically for export only. The Secretary was instructed accordingly.

EXPORT
DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Deuchar next reported on his first attendance as the Association's representative at a meeting of this Committee in London on 30th March, 1978. The Committee received and discussed Reports on current potato stocks, consumption (estimated 13% down on 1974), and tonnages offered and contracted under the Board's support Buying programme. To end-March, plantings were reported to total 16,400 hectares (approximately 10,000 hectares in eastern Counties of England, the remainder in the West Country and South Wales). Mr. Sinclair had next reported on current crop exports to date, followed by discussion of export promotion during which Mr. Grantham explained regarding support, the ban on imports etc. The Committee also learned that in July NSDO is to issue licences to exporters. Mr. Barr briefly explained in reply to Mr. Deuchar's request, the background to this point during which he also referred to the Consortium and Advisory Committee discussions on the export of NSDO varieties to Spain. The content of Mr. Aves' letter from a Spanish importer was very much in line with U.K. exporters' own views.

In conclusion the Committee had received Mr. Sinclair's Report on the Verona Exhibition and had briefly discussed the proposed new SSPPA. Mr. Forrest had not been present but Messrs. Sinclair and Arbuckle were pessimistic in this latter respect.

BRITISH
POTATO
TRADES
CONSORTIUM:

Mr. Barr next reported on the Meeting of the Consortium which he had attended in London on 4th April, 1978. Following NSDO and exports to Spain (already dealt with) there had been extensive discussion of farm gate sales. Unrecorded sales were now believed to be of the order of 20% of all sales and it was reported that, in protest against the PMB attitude, merchants in Leeds are to adopt a policy of non-co-operation with the Board. The Consortium is seeking a meeting with the PMB but Council agreed this is unlikely to lead to any action by the Board.

Discussion of the NFU/PMB proposals, now submitted to Brussels as an "Insurance Stabilisation Fund Scheme", had included Mrs. Attridge's views and comments and indicated a much lower level of producer-financed support for the future. Following General discussion of this matter by Council, Mr. Barr next reported that the Wye College is conducting a feasibility study on a U.K. futures/

Market in Potatoes. The Consortium had next discussed the Processors Scheme and the fact that the Board is not allowing the use of merchant transport. (Council agreed that a real risk existed that the Processors are using the Scheme to stockpile, which will adversely affect the 1978 crop). Mr. Barr had also raised the matter of the leaflet circularised by Central Council (to encourage the setting up of producer co-operatives), during a discussion of which by Council, Mr. Fenton reported he had been invited to attend a meeting to give the merchants' view. Mr. Barr had agreed the invitation be declined.

Concluding his Report, Mr. Barr stated the most recent meeting of the European Union had not supported an Italian request for preferential treatment for their early crop and that the Union had protested to Brussels regarding the U.K. ban on maincrop imports. The Union's Annual Congress is being held at Arnhem early in June and Mr. Barr recommended Council members' attendance in support if possible. The next meeting of the Consortium was fixed to take place in London on 12th June, 1978.

In Council's discussion of Mr. Barr's Report the Secretary drew attention to a request from a Council Member to include a discussion of the NFU/PMB proposals and the future of the Board in today's Agenda. This was briefly considered but, being felt to be somewhat precipitate as yet, it was deferred until a later date.

PROPOSED
NEW
ASSOCIATION:

Council instructed that a record of today's discussion of matters relating to the proposed new Scottish Seed Potato Promotion Association be excluded from circulated copies of the Minute, the full Minute being held by the Secretary.

ANY OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) New Seed Regulations. The Secretary reported that copies of the new Seed Regulations are now available from H.M. Stationery office. Council instructed that a suitable announcement be included in the next News Letter.

(b) Ware Members interests. The Secretary reported receipt of a complaint from an Association member that insufficient attention was being given to the interests of Ware trade members of the Association. Council considered the five specific points referred to and was unable to find ready remedies for them but agreed with the Secretary's view that Council would continue to welcome the views of all Association Members and would keep these five particular points in mind.

(c) Enquiry from Kenya. The Secretary reported receipt of a letter from Kenya, the content of which Council instructed be circulated to all members on the Association's "Export List".

(d) Golf Outing and Dance. The Secretary reported that detailed arrangements for the Golf Outing were now ready for circularisation to all Association Members. He had still to arrange a further meeting of the Entertainments Committee to consider the next annual Dinner/Dance and the possibilities for an alternative function.

(e) Date of next Meeting . It was agreed to hold the next Meeting of Council in the Station Hotel, Perth at 12.30p.m. on Friday, 12th May, 1978 and the Secretary was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

The Meeting thereupon concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

John H. Barr

PROPOSED
NEW
ASSOCIATION:

In his introductory remarks to open discussion of the proposed new Scottish Seed Potato Producers Association the Chairman explained that, although the replies to the questionnaire sent to all members of our own Association had now been analysed he was, for several reasons, reluctant to disclose precise figures. Bearing in mind the assumptions clearly set out in the questionnaire, the analysis still indicated, both by numbers of members and by hectares certified, a lack of support among our members for the proposed new Association.

In reply the Secretary read out, in numbers, hectares and percentages, the replies received in total, and broken down between producer and non-producer members, followed by breakdown of those same figures between support and non-support for the proposed new Association.

The Chairman urged all present to accord the figures utmost confidentiality meantime and to take every precaution to prevent them being disclosed in any way. He explained the indications that the NFUS appear to be trying to ensure that our Association bear full blame should the new Association not now be formed.

The Secretary next read a letter sent to the NFUS requesting analysed results of the circularisation sent in joint names of that organisation and our own Association to all registered producers in November, 1977. A telephoned reply shortly before today's Meeting had explained that the requested analysis is being completed in time for a meeting of their own on 25th April. The Chairman expressed the view that it was now time for our Association to decide its position. He reported that during a luncheon meeting with Messrs. Barclay Forrest and Bob Sandilands he and Mr. Lindsay had received verbal assurances that our Association's misgivings could be overcome. Since that time, however, further instances had occurred (i.e. the Seed Potato Advisory Committee meeting report, the article published in the latest issue of the "Farming Leader", together with the latest pamphlet on co-operatives issued by the Central Council) to contradict those verbal assurances. Whereas he had thought the Association should decide on a qualified "No" reply, he now felt such qualification unnecessary and that Council should agree to a definite "No" reply.

In subsequent discussions it was pointed out that our Association's questionnaire had provided the Association Members' own reply and a decision by Council in this respect was not required. There was support for the view that methods used, rather than the basic initiative itself, had been responsible for some resistance among Association Members. It was largely agreed that Council did now face a political decision, however, on when and how to provide the N.F.U.S. with the Association's reply and also, that the reply should take into account the results of the wider circularisation to all registered producers. It was felt that it would not be in our Association's best interests to divulge our results before the other results had been analysed and were available. There was general awareness that the degree of support among Members was fairly substantial but, without the assumptions in the questionnaire, much of that support would probably not be forthcoming, particularly since it also included "morally obliged" support. Further, if the new Association is formed without S.P.T.A. participation in management, individual Members would still be able to support the new Association if they so wished. On the other hand, continued participation against the wishes of a majority of producer Members could adversely affect our own Membership Roll.

In the light of all these considerations Council agreed to defer a decision and instructed the Secretary to arrange a meeting between representatives of the S.P.T.A. AND THE N.F.U.S., for exchange of information, as soon after 25th April, 1978 as may be possible.