

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of  
THE SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION  
held at the Station Hotel, Perth at  
12.30p.m. on Thursday, 14th SEPTEMBER, 1978

PRESENT:

Messrs. J. H. Barr, D. H. Lindsay, J.G.H. Fenton, A. J. Allan, G. Brass, J. P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, B. Fulton, J. George, J. Henderson, T. McClung, D. Maxwell, J. O. Robertson, 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. J. Cook, W. Gordon, J. R. McArthur and J. Wardlaw.

MINUTES:

The Minute of Meeting of Council held at Perth on 27th July, 1978 (copies of which had been pre-circulated to each Member of Council) was taken as read and, being formally approved, was signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS  
ARISING:

(a) Meeting with British Rail - The Secretary read out details, now received, of British Rail's Bonus Incentive Scheme for 1978/79 which comprised, basically, of a discount of £10 per wagon for each wagon of seed or ware in excess of each individual member's 1977/78 consignments "norm". Council felt this would unfairly favour modest rail users at the expense of regular larger users, especially when seed production declines. It was also noted that although Scottish members loaded, their English freight-paying members would enjoy the benefit of the Scheme and it was foreseen that the proposed arrangements could lead to manipulation.

Council agreed that details of the proposals be circulated to all S.P.T.A. members in the next News Letter with the added explanation that further discussions were being sought. The Secretariat was also instructed to convey Council's views to British Rail when inviting their representatives to a morning meeting with the Association on the date of the next Council Meeting.

(b) Meeting with Scottish Plant Breeding-Station - The Secretary next read a letter from Dr. R.C.F. Macer suggesting that the proposed Association visit to Pentlandfield be deferred from November, 1978 until early in 1979 when the conclusions of the DAFS Working Party on Plant Breeding and Crop Production should be known. Council instructed the Secretariat to write accepting this proposal.

(c) Conditions of Sale and Purchase - The Secretary explained that the Association's review sub-Committee's first meeting had still to be arranged. He pointed out that the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977 supersedes the Implied Terms Act in placing the onus to prove reasonability on the enforcer, rather than vice versa as heretofore.

Council's discussions considered the stipulated complaints periods and admixtures problems. It was agreed the Conditions sub-Committee should meet before the date of the next meeting of the Joint Liaison Committee with a view to being ready to listen to the N.A.S.P.M. views but without being too ready to change the S.P.T.A. position in these matters.

In respect of the view that fresh legislation might be held to require a tuber-indexing capability from the certifying authority it was explained the Northern Ireland system seemed to be basically Dutch-style but it was also pointed out that in view of the very minimal tolerances/

tolerances involved, costs considerations would prohibit introduction of a comparable scheme by the Scottish Department within the next three years.

(d) Scottish Seed Potato Symposium - The Secretary next read a further letter of 1st September received from Mr. K. V. Runcie of the East of Scotland College. In response to his request for nominations of delegates on 22nd November, 1978 the Secretariat was instructed to nominate Messrs. J. H. Barr, D. H. Lindsay, J. George, J. R. McArthur and J. Waddell with Messrs. G. Brass, R. Doig, J.G.H. Fenton, D. Maxwell and A. D. Williamson as alternatives.

(e) Association Trip 1979 - Mr. Blackmore explained that no progress had been made towards revising Stita's earlier proposed Itinerary. Council support for them was modest and further discussion strongly favoured emphasis on growing and roguing instead of grading, possibly reducing duration of the trip to limit costs. The Secretariat was also instructed to write to the Dutch organisation (NAK) for help with the programme and to obtain an alternative quotation from Grampian Travel Perth for consideration.

(f) Association Dinner/Dance - The Secretary repeated that a provisional booking had been made at the Salvation Hotel, Perth for Friday, 8th February, 1979 but that progress on detailed arrangements had been subject to various holiday delays. He would make a further announcement as soon as possible.

SEED  
POTATO  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Lindsay next reported on the meeting of the Seed Potato Advisory Committee held at the outset of its annual visit, to Northern Ireland this year which he had attended from 25th - 28th July, 1978.

Due to late arrivals and time devoted to the visit programme, the meeting was very brief. Subjects covered included the proposed new Promotion Association, P.M.B. Final 1977/78 shipment figures, difference between P.M.B. and NASPM quality inspections (not minuted) and crops entered for 1978 inspections figures. Mr. Sinclair of the Board had reported on blackleg in Scotch seed imported into Israel, followed by swift consideration of Scientific New Letters and confirmation of the date of the Committee's next Meeting.

Mr. Lindsay continued his Report with a resumé of the visit programme and commented on impressions gained. He quoted a native comment that "nothing (in Northern Ireland's potato industry) is compulsory, the word has no meaning there". He understood that only 25% of seed potatoes from Northern Ireland are TBZ-treated. Only varieties "Consul", King Edward" and "Dell are dressed 35 x 55mm., all other varieties being dressed 35 x 60mm. Gangrene disease was seen in shaws.

The party had visited the V.T.S.C. centre at Breen. Dr. Costello of the Plant Breeding Service regarded Scotch Seed with disfavour. A 23-acre show site on four fields in Co. Down was much behind Scottish standards and storage facilities seen were primitive. No merchants premises were seen. Crop inspections were typically Irish, with no set written tolerances but rather by eye of the Inspectors. In reply Mr. Lindsay also reported that some burning off was seen but it appeared very haphazard. Overall, there was much less discipline than in Scotland.

PLANT  
ROYALTY  
BUREAU:

Mr. Henderson next gave a brief Report on the meeting he and Mr. Cook had attended in Peebles on 15th August, 1978. Mr. Bullock had occupied the Chair, Mr. Denton arriving late. With seed interests other than potatoes represented, discussions were general rather than specific. Mr. Henderson had protested at the year by year increases in potato royalties/

royalties rates and pointed out that the housewife ultimately bore these costs, with support for this view from the Scottish N.F.U. representative (Mr. Sandilands). Essentially however the event was a public relations exercise and a good time was had by all.

SCOTTISH  
SEED  
POTATO  
PROMOTION  
ASSOCIATION:

Council next received a report from Mr. Fenton on the SSPPA Working Party meeting he and Mr. Doig had attended in Edinburgh on 16th August, 1978.

The initial six month secondment of Mr. Gordon Lyall from D.A.F.S. officially commencing on 1st November, 1978 from his own base to re-examine the proposals, confer with growers and grower/merchants to establish each section's requirements and to make a feasibility Report. The Working Party discussions confirmed Mr. Fenton's view that Mr. Lyall's examination should include market research but not market trading a decision that lacked approval from Mr. John Henderson.

Mr. Lyall is to retain the present Working Party on an advisory basis meantime but he may bring in other advisers. He may actually form a Board of Management (he thought of four growers and four merchants) with himself as chief and sole Executive.

The Central Council for Agricultural Co-operation Grant of £10,000 was also confirmed. There would be no levy at this stage, the soonest collection envisaged being based on area entered for 1979 Inspection. The Scottish N.F.U. involvement will now be purely advisory and "low Key".

JOINT  
CONSULTATIVE  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Barr next reported on the meeting which he ~~and Mr. Lindsay~~ had attended in London on 4th September, 1978. Discussions had opened with the P.M.B. survey of producers regarding farm gate sales. A remarkably good response had been reported, the results of which would be reported at the Committee's next meeting.

Retail sales of named varieties of potatoes, though generally supported by the Retailers, were impeded by lack of continuity of wholesale supplies. The general feeling had been that there are too many varieties available.

The supply position report had been based on some fact and much "guess-~~limiting~~ing". Maincrop planting was some 10% lower than last year with some increase in earlies, giving an overall drop of 6% from 1977 acreages. It had been stated that a "magic" optimum of 100,000 acres of earlies planted appeared to operate - 114,000 acres had been planted in 1978, the optimum having last been exceeded in 1971. Yields were estimated at 33.4 tonnes per hectare. The rate of movement is as thought to be nearly back to 1974 levels. No estimate of likely surplus was possible - some wastage was reported but its extent was unresolved.

The Committee had considered the support buying programme. It was estimated the 10% scheme could attract offers of up to 670,000 tonnes, whereas it seemed government agreement had been given to take off only 500,000 tonnes. In reply, Mr. Barr reported that no figure had been asked or given for the eventual surplus last (1977/78) Season.

Finally the Committee had considered Papers on the Board's ware Inspections and visits etc. and the Seed Inspection Service, which latter showed that of 432 inspections covering 4254 tonnes of Scotch seed, 337 were justified covering 2900 tonnes, being 0.92% of all U.K. seed.

BRITISH  
POTATO  
TRADES  
CONSORTIUM:

Mr. Barr continued with a Report of the Consortium meeting he had attended in London on 5th September, 1978. The morning session had opened with a trade angle discussion of the above J.C.C. meeting and the draft/

draft E.E.C. Common regime on which the Commission want early agreement. The Consortium is to press for the inclusion of farm gate sales in dressing standards. It was also reported that a refresher course for RUCIP inspectors is to be held in Amsterdam towards the end of November, 1978 and that Wye College has published a Paper on a U.K. Potato Futures Market in which respect there was a strong possibility of a winter conference being arranged to learn about this subject. Details of both these events will be circularised as soon as available.

The afternoon session had dealt at length with the future of the trade, the draft NFU/PMB proposals and the English submissions in connection with the FEOGA Grants Scheme. The meeting indicated that the trade is drawing closer together to be able to speak with a single, louder, voice. To this end Mr. Beeson is to prepare a first paper for discussion at the Consortium's next meeting.

The Secretary thereupon explained having obtained a copy of the Scottish submission in connection with the FEOGA Grants Scheme from D.A.F.S. and Council instructed that its members each be provided with a photocopy of it for consideration prior to discussion.

PRESS  
SUB-  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Lindsay next gave a brief Report on the activities of the Press sub-Committee. The energetic programme undertaken was being vigorously pursued and the impetus was being maintained by the enthusiasm and efforts of all concerned.

Several meetings had been held and a close liaison with the Association's Press Agent was being maintained. Arrangements were in hand for a small party of English agricultural journalists to visit the Perth area earlier in October. A collection of press cuttings to date was passed among Council members who instructed these be copied to all Association members for information.

ANY  
OTHER  
COMPETENT  
BUSINESS:

(a) Riddle sizes - The Chairman then read a letter from a Member requesting Council's consideration of standardisation of riddle sizes. During discussion it was agreed that much confusion existed at present which standardisation would alleviate. It was pointed out that the Association has no power to require members to limit riddle sizes but it was felt that the problem will sort itself out in course of time. Meantime it was agreed the Secretariat would re-circularise the Association's earlier recommendation.

(b) P.A.Y.E. on casual wages - The Secretary reported receipt of a member's enquiry regarding Association support in the event of difficulties which had now been encountered. He explained the background of the matter and quoted from the Minute of Council's meeting of 29th January, 1975 when Association support had been declared. One Council member questioned the meaning of "support" and what action the Association could take. During full discussion it was agreed to endorse the earlier Minute and the Secretariat was instructed to enquire more fully into this case and in what respect Association support could best be given.

(c) Membership - Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of P.M.B. notifications of licence applications in respect of Messrs. R.V.K. Drysdale, Innerwick, (Ware), Ian Glen, Hillside, Montrose (seed and ware) and a letter of application for Association Membership from Anderson McKay (Produce) Ltd., Forfar, who have also applied for P.M.B. licences. Council found no reason to oppose these licence applications and instructed the Secretariat to send formal invitations to Association membership to all three merchants once the licences are known to have been granted.

(d)/

(d) Curling Match - The Secretary explained the problem over the venue for the first leg of the annual Curling Match and the provisional booking made for the event to take place in Perth on Wednesday, 8th November, 1978. It was felt this could be too early for those whose harvesting would not be completed and the Secretariat was instructed to revise the booking to Friday, 24th November (which alternative was understood to be available) and to circularise the outcome to all Association Members thereafter.

(e) Date of next meeting - After a short discussion it was agreed that Council meet again on Thursday, 26th October, 1978 at the Station Hotel, Perth for morning discussions with British Rail followed by Council's own meeting in the afternoon. The Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

The meeting then closed with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John H. Barr". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the main text block.