

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
held at the City Mills Hotel, Perth at
10.30a.m. on Thursday, 30th NOVEMBER,
1978

PRESENT: Messrs. J. H. Barr, D. H. Lindsay, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Cook, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, J. George, J. R. McArthur, T. McClung, K. McKenzie, D. Maxwell and J. Waddell, 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, J. P. Deuchar, B. Fulton, W. Gordon, J. Henderson, J.O. Robertson and A. D. Williamson.

MINUTES: The Minute of Meeting of Council held at Perth on 26th October, 1978 (copies of which had been pre-circulated to each Member of Council) was taken as read. It was formally approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING: (a) Association visit 1979 - This matter was deferred until later in today's meeting.

(b) Association Membership - Mr. Blackmore reported that in reply to instructed formal invitations, Anderson-McKay (Produce) Ltd. and Mr. Ian Glen had now both returned forms of application for Association Membership and had been added to the Roll of Members. Despite a reminder, however, a reply to the third invitation, to Messrs. A. & J. Dow and Son [now William Dow (Potatoes) Ltd.] was still awaited. Council confirmed these arrangements.

The Secretary drew Council's attention to the latest list of amendments to the P.M.B. Register, which included cancellation of licences held by Messrs. P.L. Fordyce. He explained the circumstances briefly which Mr. Fordyce felt could also affect other Association Members. Council formally noted the position.

Mr. Lindsay next reported a conversation with Mr. W.J. Whyte, Craigend Farm, Methven in which Mr. Whyte had sought Association Membership. After brief discussion Council agreed to invite Mr. Whyte to make formal application for membership and instructed the Secretariat accordingly.

(c) Conditions of Sale - The Secretary reported that draft proposals for revised Conditions expected from N.A.S.P.M. were still awaited (see below)

(d) Correspondence with D.A.F.S. - The Secretary next read out Mr. Todd's reply to the Association's letter regarding (i) re-sealing after commercial inspection (ii) MAFF tuber inspections and (iii) sealing of containers. The Chairman also read out a letter dated 20th November from Mr. Todd requiring prior notification of contracts and the buyer's prior agreement to accept bulk delivery, before labels to seal bulk loads will be issued.

Council devoted long discussion to these various points and their implications. While it was felt the Department appeared to "making a meal" of bulk loads, it was recognised that it was vital to the Department to preserve the identity of each crop. It was also recognised that whereas under the former Scottish Seed Regulations this preservation was confined to Scotland, the new 1978 Regulations apply throughout the U.K. and thus extend the scope of preservation. Furthermore the "marketing" provisions in the 1978 Regulations are a recognition that under U.K. Regulations "change of ownership" is a continuing process.

Nevertheless Council agreed that while prior sealing of bulk loads is to be accepted, prior notification of contracts and buyer's agreement are both/

are both unfounded in the Regulations and un-necessary and are therefore unacceptable. The Secretariat was instructed to convey these views in writing to Mr. Todd and to ask in what circumstances and for what reasons was it envisaged that the issue of a label for a bulk load would be refused.

Continuing discussions resulted in agreement to leave the matters of invoicing "as per labels" and resealing after commercial inspections for further consideration at the forthcoming Seed Potato meeting. Similarly, long consideration of "M.A.F.F. inspections within 14 days" led to referral of this matter to the same meeting, diversions into Conditions of Sale implications leading Mr. Lindsay (in readiness for the Joint Liaison Committee Meeting in London on 4th December) to ask for definition of Council's position on possible extension of the 3-day and 10-day complaints periods.

It was felt that NASPM and SPTA had very similar interests in this respect and the three-day period was least contentious. Supporting a view that extension of the 10 day period to a 14 day period would increase the likelihood of its acceptance, in a Court, as "reasonable", the Secretary pointed out that MAFF and DAFF use a 14 day-period. Reference was also made to a 1970 case in Perth, in which a Sheriff's Summarisation had stated that "sixteen days was an unreasonably long time to complain in respect of a valuable perishable commodity". Other views were that the NFUS would never entertain an extension of the 10-day period and that if NASPM seek an extension to 14 days the SPTA should seek a reduction to 7 days (to permit a status-quo 10-day compromise).

In summary, the Chairman undertook that the Association's delegates to the Joint Liaison Committee would adhere to the existing 3-day and 10-day periods and refer back to Council if any changes were sought.

(e) Press sub-Committee - Mr. Lindsay reported on recent activities. He expressed concern regarding a lack of supportive "feed-back" from Agripress Ltd. and particular disappointment in the apparent lack of result from the recent press visit, possibly accentuated by Mr. Derek Watson's indisposition. From a recent plain-speaking meeting with Messrs. Reader and Grater of that firm he had concluded that a six-months renewal of arrangements would be acceptable to them.

Mr. Barr confirmed these views and expressed doubt whether members would fund a renewal of present arrangements. Following discussion it was agreed that the Press sub-Committee should seek an extension of the present contract with Agripress Ltd. in respect of Mr. Watson's illness and should meet again separately to decide on the form of approach to be made to Association members for continuation of the Press and publicity initiative.

BRITISH
POTATO
TRADES
CONSORTIUM:

Messrs. Barr and Lindsay next reported on the Meeting of the Consortium which they had attended in London on 13th November, 1978. Progress towards common E.E.C. Regulations had been very limited. A recent pre-judgement view of the U.K. ban on imports indicated the U.K. had won the first-stage "battle" but not the "war". It was felt new Regulations would not come into effect for the 1979 crop, indicating that the ban was likely to be repeated. In respect of a possible British Potatoes Futures Market a General Committee (Working Party) had been formed with Mr. Tony Beeson as Chairman and a sub-Committee, led by Mr. Howard England, will look into contract terms, specifications and storage facilities.

Progress on total metrication of fruit and vegetable sales had been slowed/

slowed, a voluntary end-1981 completion date having received little support and compulsory legislation to this end was viewed with concern. Oral reports had considered crop and stocks reports as satisfactory and in good condition (N. Ireland exports had suffered from severe Dutch competition)

The Financial position had been reported and accepted. Increased Secretarial Service costs had been agreed and a revision of the percentage contributions from constituent members was under way. The Consortium had also agreed to press for the retention of the British Institute's Standard for paper sacks.

Finally Mr. Barr reported that Mr. Harold Aves (vice Chairman) had been unanimously elected as Chairman in succession to Mr. Douglas Smith who had been elected as Vice Chairman for a one-year (1979) term.

JOINT
CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Barr continued by reporting on the meeting he had attended with Mr. Lindsay in London on 13th December, 1978. The meeting had learned that the total U.K. crop of 183,935 hectares (of which 97% had been stored by the date of the meeting) had reached a new overall U.K. yield record of 32.5 tonnes per hectare. Improving consumption had also been reported (although still 5% down on the last (1974) normal year) and exports had been stated to be going well.

The estimated crop surplus was given as 400,000 tonnes (Council's discussion of this figure indicated a degree of understatement) and 450,000 tonnes were stated to have been contracted to the P.M.B. under the Buying Programme. Orders for stockfeed had been considered satisfactory although Council's discussion of Buying Programme tonnages and delivery dates revealed some degree of unease. Changes in the 1979 Ware Standards had been indicated (including producers names on bags, sought by retailers) and publicity activities had also been reported. Mr. Lindsay also explained that the P.M.B. had approached MAFF for supportive assistance in export markets without reply, which had engendered anger when viewed against the comparable position of French early crop imports into the U.K.

SEED
POTATO
CONFERENCE:

In the absence of Council-Member attendance at Stoneleigh, (Staffs) on 15th November, 1979 no report was available for consideration

SEED
POTATO
SYMPOSIUM:

Attending members at the event at Battleby, Perth on 22nd November, 1978 reported briefly. In the General view the well attended occasion had been worthwhile, although perhaps over-extended in scope. It was also agreed that press-coverage had resulted in unduly biased publicity.

EXPORT
DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE:

In the absence of the Association's delegate (Mr. J.P. Deuchar) to the meeting held in London on 28th November, 1978 his Report was deferred until the next meeting of Council.

ASSOCIATION
ACCOUNTS:

Mr. Blackmore reported that the Association's Accounts to 31st October, 1978 (pre-circularised to Council Members) had now received the Auditor's approval without alteration. Pre-circulated estimates of Income and Expenditure for the ensuing year were briefly considered but, under pressure of time, recommendations to the Association's Annual General Meeting were deferred until the next Meeting.

ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING:

After a short discussion Council agreed that the Association's Annual General Meeting be held in the Station Hotel, Perth at 2.30p.m. on Friday, 19th January, 1979.

ANY
OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) Date of next meeting: It was agreed that the next meeting of Council would be held in conjunction with the A.G.M. commencing at 11a.m. It was envisaged the meeting would adjourn for lunch about 12.30p.m. and be resumed immediately following the Association's Annual General Meeting. The Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

(b) /

(b) Association Trip 1979 - The Secretary reported receipt of a quotation from Grampian Travel Ltd. which exceeded the original quotation from Stita. After a brief discussion it was agreed to continue investigation of the earlier alternative proposals.

(c) Curling - It was reported that the first leg of the annual Curling Match had been played in Perth on 8th November, 1979 resulting in a win for the North by 2 Shots.

(d) Annual Dinner/Dance - In reply to Mr. Lindsay, the Secretary explained that although a provisional booking for 8th February, 1979 at Salvation Hotel, Perth was still held, it seemed unlikely that arrangements could be completed by that date, indicating that this event would not now take place.

(e) Future Annual General Meetings - Following a brief explanation by Mr. Lindsay, it was agreed to keep in mind the possibility of inviting Mr. Geoffrey Grantham to address a future Association A.G.M.

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

John H. Barr