

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the  
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION held  
at the Station Hotel, PERTH at 11a.m. on  
FRIDAY, 19th JANUARY, 1979.

PRESENT:

Messrs. J. H. Barr, D. H. Lindsay, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Cook, J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, B. Fulton, J. George, J. Henderson, J.R. McArthur, T. McClung, K. McKenzie, 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 an apology for absence on behalf of Mr. W. Gordon and for late arrival on behalf of Mr. B. Fulton.

MINUTES:

The Minute of Meeting of Council held in Perth on 30th November, 1978 (copies of which had been pre-circulated to each Member of Council) was taken as read. It was pointed out that it recorded (on page 3) a meeting of the Joint Consultative Council on 13th December, 1978 which, in fact, was held on 13th November, 1978. Subject to this correction the Minute was formally approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS  
ARISING:

(a) Association Visit 1979 - The Secretary gave a brief resumé of the costings obtained to date and sought indication of possible support before proceeding further with arrangements. Round the table replies were taken and Council agree' plans for a visit this year be shelved. The Secretary was instructed to advise Stita Tours and all members accordingly.

(b) Annual Dinner/Dance - The Secretary reported that the Entertainments Committee meeting on 12th January, 1979 had decided that not to proceed with provisional arrangements for 9th February, 1979 but to arrange a completely restyled function at the Station Hotel, Perth on 14th or 21st December, 1979. Council endorsed these decisions and instructed all members be advised.

Mr. Hunter also explained that no change is to be made in the date of the Golf Outing (17th May, 1979) and that the Entertainments Committee had undertaken to oversee the arrangements for the second leg of the Curling Match in Perth on 16th February, 1979.

(c) Membership - Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of a formal application for Association membership from Craigend Growers (Methven) Ltd. in reply to Council's invitation to Mr. Wm. Whyte of that firm. Council formally instructed enrollment of that firm as of this date. Mr. Blackmore also reported having sent a further reminder to Wm. Dow (Potatoes) Ltd., Kilsyth, but that again no reply had been received.

(d) Potato Futures Market - Mr. Hunter next briefly reported receipt of a copy of a letter by Solicitors for the Grain and Feed Trade Association Ltd. to their U.S. Agents seeking information on the causes of the failure of the American Potato Futures Market. Council noted that a copy of the reply is to be received in due course.

(e) Ware Standards 1979 - The Secretary also read a letter from the P.M.B. dated 7th December, 1978 proposing that the 1979 Prescription should (i) specify that wizened or shrivelled tubers are not ware potatoes and (ii) sub-paras. 1 (c) (xi) and (xii) of the '78 Prescription be amalgamated and additionally provide that any damage by cutting (slicing) must be healed. After a short discussion Council agreed these proposals be accepted.

(f) Association's Financial Estimates 1978 - 79 - Council next re-considered the Estimates circulated prior to the previous Meeting. In reply Mr. Blackmore explained that whereas the full impact of inflation over recent years had been largely overcome by economies the 15% increase in Subscriptions last year had been because costs could not continue to be contained. That year had also seen a marked re-assertion of the decline of membership (with a net loss of 8 members) which was a worrying feature. He felt that the present position could just be maintained.



maintained by an increase of 6½% in all Subscriptions for 1978-79 but this made no allowance for further resignations or other unforeseen items. After due consideration Council agreed to recommend that the Annual General Meeting make no change in the existing subscription tonnage brackets for 1978-79 and that Subscription Rates be increased by 7½% (to the nearest whole £1) at each of those levels.

(g) P.M.B. Licences - Mr. Fordyce reported that his firm's Seed Merchants and Ware Merchants licences, (revoked in August 1978) had been restored in December, 1978 with exactly the same serial numbers. He wondered if a temporary licence procedure might be devised to cover future situations similar to his own. Following a brief discussion the Secretariat was instructed to ask the Board to spell out for the guidance and advice of members the changes in circumstances that require re-applications for merchants' licences.

JOINT  
LIAISON  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Barr reported on the meeting of the Joint Liaison Committee which he had attended with Messrs. Lindsay, McClung and Hunter in London on 4th December, 1978. The meeting had considered arrangements with British Rail and their discussion of the Bonus Incentive Scheme with larger users. Mr. Blackmore added at this point that during a telephone call to British Rail's Glasgow office regarding the effect of the current rail strike on the Bonus Scheme, he had learned that discussions with larger users had been shelved. This was stated to be due to extremely light loadings in December and anticipated difficulties of van supplies aggravated by industrial action, the decision and reasons having already been conveyed to NASPM by letter. In view of this information Council instructed the Secretary to seek British Rail's written assurance that sufficient vans will be made available to meet the anticipated surge in demand as the present Season progresses.

Resuming his Report, Mr. Barr explained some discussion of Plant Royalty Bureau Export Licences had followed, progressing to re-statements of views on definition of mechanical damage in seed potatoes. This had been followed by re-consideration of M.A.F.F. inspections of Scotch seed samples in which respect Council felt developments should be awaited, asking to receive reports of any such that occur.

In conclusion Mr. Barr explained that even NASPM Council was awaiting information from its sub-Committee on proposals for revision of the Conditions of Sale, which clearly could not now become operative by 1st July, 1979. He reported that Mr. Chris Baker had asked that S.P.T.A. give its views within 10-14 days of eventual receipt of the proposals but had been told this was quite out of the question since under no circumstances could we reply without prior consultation with and the agreement of the N.F.U.S. Council agreed the S.P.T.A. would enjoy the benefit of NASPM's efforts without cost, the Secretary regretting in hindsight that an S.P.T.A. representative had not been invited to serve on the NASPM sub-committee.

SCOTTISH  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Lindsay next reported on the meeting of the Scottish Advisory Committee which he had attended in London on 6th December, 1978 at which Mr. Gordon Lyall had been in attendance. Items 1 to 6 of the Agenda had been formalities and quickly dealt with. Item 7 had provided details of prices and the guarantee level which, though now outdated, he summarised briefly. Item 8 had dealt with estimated 1978 Plantings, indications being that plantings of earlies would be reduced in 1979. Items 9 to 13 had considered the supply position, 1978 crop statistics including estimated surplus, consumption, stock-feed, movements, exports (though the latter indicated potential, nothing definite had been reported) and 1978 certification figures. Item 14 had dealt with estimated production costs revealing that, based on 27% own saved seed, 1978 crops cost £1406 per hectare (£562.40 per acre), the estimate for 1979 being £1491 per hectare (almost £600 per acre). Council's brief discussion agreed these figures were a statistical exercise on averages for England. Mr. Lindsay concluded his Report by explaining that the final item (15) on the Agenda had dealt with summarised results of the 1977 crop buying programme of which Council was already aware.



SEED  
POTATO  
WORKING  
PARTY:

Mr. Barr opened his Report on the Seed Potato Working Party Meeting in Edinburgh on 18th December, 1978 by explaining that during the review of the first seasons operation of the new Seed Potato Regulations, particularly in respect of consignments sealing, the Association's delegates had been unable to make much progress. The Department were ready to meet individual complainants. Mr. Cook regretted having been unable to be present but, after explaining the problems he had encountered with sealing of bulk containers in the North (which were non-existent in the Borders area) still felt the Department's insistence on prior buyer confirmation was totally unnecessary for bulk load sealing.

Council discussed this point at some length. It was felt the ruling would encourage seed in bulk to be despatched as ware which would make maintenance of U.K. continuity of identity even more difficult without overcoming official fears of mixture with English seed and reloading into Scotch bags. It was agreed the Department be asked to meet with Messrs. Cook, McKenzie and McArthur (and possibly Mr. Barr) for further discussion to resolve this problem and the Secretariat was instructed accordingly.

Mr. Barr continued his Report, turning to the 1978 crop review and disease statistics. There had been a remarkable recovery in respect of Leaf Roll, Dr. Todd having stated that two-thirds of the growing crop samples actually examined in 1978 had been totally devoid of this disease. Veinal necrosis was revealed to be gradually increasing, at the same time the year had seen a sharp increase in the incidence of blackleg, although 90% of the crop remained free of it.

Consideration had next turned to the Department two Papers on the 1979 Crop Year and future policy (since copied to each member of Council). The first of these envisaged no changes beyond implementations of the ban on the sale of uncertified seed and the issue of "advisory" burning down "dates (the latter acknowledged to be a "cosmetic exercise", since Dr. Todd stated that present data was quite inadequate to support a compulsory Scottish programme).

The first Paper envisaged progressive reduction towards a nil tolerance for mild mosaic in FS and AAI grades and reduction of the tolerance for blackleg in AAI stocks. Council's discussion of these points revealed a clear-cut rejection of a nil tolerance for mild mosaic, viewed as unnecessary and purposeless in practice, especially since E.E.C. trials results support the view that present standards are already high enough. It was also felt that it was contradictory to improve presently highest standards still further in a declining market and one delegate to the Edinburgh Meeting explained his impression was that the Department intends to implement this change anyway.

Council felt sympathetic to a gradual reduction of blackleg tolerance but agreed there should be no reduction until a great deal more is known about this disease and clear-cut counter measures (including total eradication from VTSC clones) are available. Council also noted the Department's acceptance that more extensive use of fumigation and misting against gangrene and skin-spot may encourage a greater incidence of bacterial rots and agreed that V.T.S.C. matters should be left to the V.T.S.C. Raisers Committee to answer.

The Secretariat was instructed to convey these views to the Department. Mr. Blackmore pointed out that the Department had felt a further Working Party meeting may be necessary. The Secretary then drew Council's attention to the time and suggested further discussion of the Department's Papers be deferred in favour of consideration of views on Mr. Gordon Lyall's pre-circulated Paper in readiness for the Annual General Meeting.

(adjourned)  
OTHER  
MATTERS:

The Chairman's view was that neither Council nor the Association could give a collective view or decision at this stage, it being entirely/

entirely up to each individual to make up his own mind.

The Secretary also reported that the death of Dr. James Hardie had occurred, the Chairman explaining he intended to deal with this matter at the A.G.M.

Finally it was agreed that the present Council Meeting be adjourned until after the A.G.M. and should that not prove possible, Council would meet again at 12.30p.m. on Thursday, 1st February, 1979 (subsequently announced to be at the City Mills Hotel, Perth) to transact the remainder of today's business. The Secretariat was instructed accordingly and Council then adjourned.

*John H. Barr*