

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the  
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION  
held at the City Mills Hotel, Perth at  
12.30p.m. on Thursday, 1st FEBRUARY, 1979

PRESENT:

Messrs. J. H. Barr, J.G.H. Fenton, B. Fulton, J. George, D.H. Lindsay, J. R. McArthur, T. McClung, K.A. McKenzie, D. Maxwell, J.O. Robertson and J. M. Waddell, with R. D. Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

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

APOLOGIES:

Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies on behalf of Messrs. A. J. Allan, G. Brass, J. Cook, J. P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, W. Gordon, J. Henderson and A. D. Williamson:

MINUTES:

The Minute of Meeting of Council held in Perth on 19th January, 1979 (copies of which had been precirculated to each Member of Council) was taken as read. It was formally approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS  
ARISING:

(a) P.M.B. Licences and (b) British Rail - Mr. Blackmore reported that letters asking (a) for guiding information for circularisation and (b) for assurance that adequate rail vans will be available had been sent as instructed. Replies to both letters were not yet to hand.

(c) Association delegation to DAFS - He further reported having telephoned the Department to arrange a suitable meeting date to discuss bulk-load sealing. Due to existing commitments (in Edinburgh, Geneva and Great Malvern) Mr. Todd could not be available before today's meeting. It had been agreed to defer the request until writing with completed observations of 'DAFS' two Papers after today's Council Meeting. It had also been ascertained that no plans are so far in hand to call another meeting of the Seed Potato Working Party.

Mr. Maxwell explained he had discussed bulk-load sealing with the Department's Senior Inspector in Dundee (Mr. Pullar) yesterday, learning that a roped lorry cover sealed by the merchant would be acceptable. Council's general view was that this problem will resolve itself through time.

SEED  
POTATO  
WORKING  
PARTY:

Council then resumed its consideration of the first of the pre-circulated D.A.F.S' Papers (which had been adjourned at its meeting on 19th January, 1979) at Head 3-Foundation Stocks. Discussion led to agreement that limitation to three years propagation in this grade offered no advantage either to the trade or the growers. It was felt to be a change for the sake of change, retention of four years having the merit of maintaining a larger quantity of stock in a higher grade. It was also reported that Seed Potato Advisory Committee discussion on 30th January, 1979 had revealed that English interests favoured retention of four years. Council also rejected para. 3(b) proposal as not in the growers' best interests and called for no change in existing requirements.

Turning to par. 4-other Commercial Grades - the Chairman felt the proposal had the merit of seeking to avoid confusion with Dutch grades, particularly in respect of Scotch Basic A1 and AA with Dutch Certified A. Discussion ranged over semantic problems, export overtones, advertising and customer re-education problems. It was agreed that Council was not opposed to change, but would prefer "P" (for "Prime" or "Premium") rather than "Q" grade, instead of A1 and AA. There was some support for combination of A1 and AA into a single PS grade, rather than PS and PS1 (since only the U.K. takes Tobacco Veinal Necrosis into inspection account), but it was also recognised that combination had drawbacks which favoured adoption of PS1 and P.S. Council was unanimous in rejection of year numbering within a PS Grade because the questionable advantage claimed would be minimal compared with total customer confusion that would arise from P.S numbering, quite apart from extending present illogical price differentials in FS grade into the PS Grade.

Discussion/



Discussion of Para. 4(c) led Council to agree to consider the proposed tolerance reductions (felt to be beyond the limits of human error) only when it can be demonstrated that the health of the stocks can stand it. It was also agreed that a more practical improvement in health standards could be achieved by the introduction of a progressive (seed-growing) area-by-area ban on the planting of uncertified seed in Scotland. Para. 4 (d) was held to have been covered by retention of separate PS and PS grades, while Para. 4(c), being felt to indicate the likelihood that the Department intended to introduce P.S. year-numbering anyway, led to a call for Council to insist that such a change must not be introduced.

Para. 5 was readily approved in general, brief discussion indicating that more strongly definitive terminology be sought (e.g. "Statutory Schemes of official inspections for approval of seed potatoes" instead of "seed potato certification schemes"). Para. 6. was felt to base upon a fundamental error and to be of no significance to the rest of the Paper. The Secretary was instructed to convey all these various views of Council to the Department.

Turning to consideration of the Department's second Paper ("Seed Potato Consultative Machinery"), discussions centred on the over-dilution of practical potato production and marketing representation that would arise from the proposed constitution of the Consultative Panel. It was also recognised that it would increase the existing amount of "two hats", representation and still further dilute the merchant voice. Overall the Panel would be overwhelmingly intellectually/academically/bureaucratically oriented and provide no cover for day-by-day practical matters

To overcome these aspects Council agreed to propose an additional practical forum, composed of 3 or 4 representatives each from our Association and the National Farmers Union of Scotland and one from the VTSC Raisers to consult direct with the Department. The Secretary was instructed to submit this proposal to the Department and send a copy of it to the NFUS for information meantime. In conclusion of this Item of the Agenda it was agreed to await receipt of a formal invitation before deciding upon nomination of the Association's Representatives to the proposed Seed Potato Consultative Panel.

PRESS SUB-COMMITTEE: Mr. Lindsay next reported on recent activities of the Press sub-Committee. He explained that of the 33 original contributors to the Press Fund, 2 had notified their intention not to participate in a second trial period and payments had been received from 17 of the remaining 31 contributors. Pointing out that this level of support precluded renewal of the contract with Agripress, he summarised his exploratory discussions with Mr. W. H. Kemp in respect of his possible appointment as Association Press Officer and submitted recommendations from the sub-Committee that (a) no attempt be made to renew the contract with Agripress; (b) the Press sub-Committee continue in being (c) the initiative to secure Mr. Kemp's services be continued and (d) explanatory circularisations of contributors and members be instructed.

Council's discussions showed marked concern that financial support relied on a diminishing number of contributors. The possibility that costs would be considerably reduced under the proposed alternative arrangements and provide for a second trial period of up to a year (instead of the six months of the first period) led on to consideration of incorporation of Press costs into annual membership subscriptions thereafter. Council duly agreed to accept the sub-Committee's recommendations and instructed the Secretariat accordingly.

SEED  
POTATO  
ADVISORY:

Mr. Lindsay continued, reporting information received from Mr. Craig Davie on a meeting of the Seed Potato Advisory Committee held in London on 30th January, 1979 (which Mr. Lindsay had been unable to attend). Convened primarily to nominate Mr. James McFarlane as the P.M.B. representative to the proposed new Seed Potato Consultative Panel, this step had been formally completed under Item 8 of the Agenda.

Items 1-7 of the Agenda had been formalities and speedily disposed of. Item 9 had dealt with the two DAFS Papers, the meeting favouring retention of FS4 grade and Mr. Sinclair had sought adoption of the term "Elite" among Scotch Seed grades. Item 10 had dealt with Scientific and Technical News Letters (little of interest) while Item 11 had concerned seed loadings which, interestingly/



interestingly had shown that in each of the years '65, '68, '71 and '73, loadings by 31st December had all been well below 70,000 tonnes, yet each of these seasons finally achieved total loadings in excess of 200,000 tonnes. Council's discussion of this latter point led into general but inconclusive consideration of current transportation problems.

ANY  
OTHER  
COMPETENT  
BUSINESS:

(a) Proposed Scottish Seed Potato Marketing Board - Referring to the address given following the Association's A.G.M., the Chairman reported receiving a further visit from Mr. Lyall during which he had <sup>been</sup> anxious that our Association should not reject the proposals at this stage and had pointed out that rejection could still occur later, when the two-thirds producer majority approval had to be sought. A Working Party Meeting has been arranged for the morning of 13th February to be followed by an afternoon meeting with the Press to publicly announce the proposals. The Chairman felt sure the Press would seek the Association's views and thought Council should brief the Association's representatives. In Mr. Doig's absence today and with Mr. Fenton to be abroad at that time it was agreed Mr. Barr would attend despite certain drawbacks this could entail.

Council agreed that with many non-grower members within the Association it was not in a position to formulate an official collective view and that each individual producer - member must decide his own particular view. Mr. Barr read a draft of a brief statement that might be made available to the Press on that day. Discussion gave rise to some amendments before approval and it was also agreed the final Statement should be circularised to all Association Members on 13th February, 1979.

(b) Export Development Committee - The Secretary explained that a Report of the Meeting held on 28th November had not been available for Council's meeting on 30th November last. With Mr. Deuchar not present today the matter was continued until Council's next Meeting.

(c) Appointment of Association's Representatives - The Secretary explained that, although Council's meeting of 26th October last had formally re-appointed representatives to the four P.M.B. Committees, the usual annual appointment following Election results had not been dealt with on 30th November last, or at the adjourned meeting on 19th January.

After brief discussion it was agreed to re-appoint the representatives as Minuted on 28th November, 1977 with the exception of Messrs. Doig and Fenton to the Scottish Seed Potato Producers Working Party (now lapsed) and the recognition that the appointments to the Seed Potato Working Party would lapse when the proposed Seed Potato Consultative Panel comes into being.

(d) Conditions of Sale - A copy of the first draft of NASPM's proposed revision of their Conditions of Sale having become available unofficially, it was agreed copies be circulated in confidence to the Association's Conditions sub-Committee and an early meeting be arranged. It was envisaged that any obvious comments might be communicated to the Scottish Members of NASPM Council before it meets to consider the first draft on 15th February, 1979.

(e) Crop Loss Claim - Mr. Blackmore briefly reported on an English Court decision (in Bodmin) brought to his attention (with a newspaper cutting) by Mr. Robertson. Pending obtaining more details of the actual Court proceedings this matter was continued until Council's next meeting.

(f) Date of next Meeting - After a brief discussion Council agreed to meet again in the Station Hotel, Perth at 12.30p.m. on Thursday, 8th March, 1979.

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

*John H. Barr*