

MINUTE OF MEETING OF COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
held at the Station Hotel, PERTH at 12.30p.m.
on Thursday, 8th MARCH, 1979

PRESENT: Messrs. J. H. Barr, G. Brass, J. Cook, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Henderson, D. H. Lindsay, J. R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, D. Maxwell, J. M. Waddell and A.D. Williamson, with D. Blackmore (Assistant Secretary) in attendance.

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

APOLOGIES: Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies on behalf of Messrs. A.J. Allan, J. P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J. Fordyce, B. Fulton, J. George, W. Gordon, T. McClung, J.O. Robertson and R. D. Hunter (Secretary).

MINUTES: The Minute of Meeting of Council held in Perth on 1st February, 1979 (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) P.M.B. Licences - Mr. Blackmore briefly reported the substance of the reply received from the Board's Registration Officer. Council agreed the next News Letter should draw Members' attention to the relative Licence Conditions.

(b) British Rail - The content of the reply received from British Rail having been notified to all Members already, Council's discussions concerned the current acute shortage of rail vans. It was generally agreed that a unique combination of many factors has created a situation in which no amount of extra pressure on British Rail will provide a speedy solution. Council instructed the Secretariat to write Mr. Andrew Welsh, M.P., pointing out that this Association had warned British Rail of the impending shortage and maintained close liaison with them at all times. It was also agreed the Association should write British Rail to ascertain whether withdrawal of vans from service is taking place on serial number (age) rather than working condition considerations and also for assurance that new, non-potato business attracted by (now) favourable rail freight charges would not be allowed precedence over traditional perishable potato traffic in the allocation of the available supplies of vans.

(c) Sealing of bulk loads - Mr. Cook reported briefly on the meeting of Association delegates with Mr. Todd of DAFS, the delegates' impressions on whether all points had been resolved not being unanimous. Mr. Cook also recounted his further experiences since the meeting. Council's discussions led to the Secretariat being instructed to write Mr. Todd to record the various points as set out in the draft letter already prepared.

(d) Nomination of Association Representatives - Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of a formal invitation from D.A.F.S. to nominate two representatives to the proposed new Seed Potato Consultative Panel for a three-year term. Following discussion Messrs. J.H. Barr and D. H. Lindsay were formally appointed, the Secretariat being instructed to ensure that any necessary substitution will be permitted.

The Secretariat was also instructed to circularise all Council Members with Agendas and Reports of all Consultative Panel Meetings that occur and it was agreed that Council would meet before each Panel Meeting to brief its representatives.

Mr. Barr next explained that an approach had been made to the N.F.U.S. to set up a Liaison Group jointly with our Association and the V.T.S.C. Growers to re-inforce the practical day to day consultative / advice function with DAFS (and thus the proposed new Panel). Mr. Blackmore reported that a reply to the approach must await the outcome of the NFUS' A.G.M. today and the probable revision/

revision of their Potato Committee representation. Council agreed that Messrs. J.H. Barr, D.H. Lindsay, J.G.H. Fenton and R. Doig (all of whom formerly represented the Association in the now disbanded Seed Potato Working Party) shall represent the Association in the proposed Liaison Group.

(e) Press sub-Committee - Mr. Lindsay reported that following further discussion, Mr. W. H. Kemp had agreed to act as the Association's Press Officer and had submitted a Release for approval, which the Chairman read out and Council approved for issue subject to insertion of "financial" into "support for export". Mr. Lindsay had stressed the need for press coverage in England - Mr. Kemp had given his assurance that he can handle this, he now awaits supply of further material from the Association and Mr. Lindsay pressed Council Members for suitable subject matter.

Referring to adverse criticism of Scotch Seed published in the January issue of "Arable Farmer," Mr. Lindsay reported he had written personally to the author of the article and he tabled the reply for those Council Members who wished to read it.

Mr. Blackmore next reported on the Press Fund finances. The First Trial Period Account now ready for circulation showed an overall surplus expenditure of £17.33. Of the 33 contributors, 24 had renewed their support for the Second Trial Period to the extent of £1,059.26. Inclusive of V.A.T. thereon (£84.74), Bank Interest received since 1.2.79 (£7.39) and Tax retained in hand from the first period (£9.53), but less the deficit of £17.33 referred to, a total sum of £1150 is in the Bank on Deposit Receipt and earning further interest of 35 pence per day.

The Chairman voiced concern that a smaller number of Members was bearing the total cost of this activity. He urged that an early further Meeting of the sub-Committee take place.

(f) Proposed Scottish Seed Potato Association/Board - Mr. Barr reported briefly on the Working Party meeting and Press Reception he had attended in Edinburgh on 13th February, 1979. Council noted that Press coverage had reported N.F.U.S. declaration of full support for the initiative to set up a new Association but omitted any mention of the proposed new Board. In reply, Mr. Barr explained he had conveyed the context of the Association's agreed Press Statement to the journalists etc. but had been able to distribute only few copies of it to them. In separately recorded radio interviews subsequently broadcast, his own interview had been the only reservedly dissenting one. Council again discussed at some length whether it should agree and publicise an Association view but eventually agreed to await publication of the response of all producers to the proposals. In the event the results are stated separately for farmers and grower-merchants, to attempt to blame the trade for possible failure of the initiative, then the Association can issue a separate Press Notice at that time. Council also agreed the Press Statement prepared for 13th February be passed to Mr. Kemp for publication.

ENTERTAINMENTS
COMMITTEE :

Mr. Blackmore reported that the Meeting held in Perth on 9th February, 1979 had satisfied itself on the arrangements for the annual Curling Match (Second leg) in Perth on 16th February; had discussed the details of the annual Golf Outing at Gleneagles on Thursday, 17th May, 1979 (for circularisation to all Association Members in due course) and had progressed further details of the Dinner/Dance programme which the Secretary is now to take up with Agency contacts.

In reply, Mr. Blackmore stated the Dance to be provisionally booked for Friday, 14th December, 1979 but announcement of this date/

date had been deferred so that programme details, to be decided at the Committee's next meeting on 30th March, can be included for greater impact.

CONDITIONS
SUB-COMMITTEE:

Mr. Williamson next reported that the meeting held in Perth on 9th February, 1979 had very carefully considered NASPM's proposed Conditions, clause by clause. No serious objection had been found (indeed the sub-Committee had been surprised that the degree of protection adoption of the proposals would afford the Scottish Merchant was greater than expected) subject, of course, to certain adjustments to conform with Scots Law and terminology. The Secretary is to arrange to meet NASPM's Solicitors to discuss and clarify several points.

Mr. Blackmore added that Mr. Hunter is seriously concerned at the very meagre formal contact from NASPM throughout the extensive period elapsed in drafting the proposals. Accordingly, by telephone with Mr. Trahair this morning, Mr. Blackmore had learned that at its meeting on 15th February NASPM Council had remitted six amendments back to its Legal Committee. It was now expected a final draft incorporating these amendments will be forwarded to this Association formally after 23rd March, 1979.

In subsequent discussion Council noted that insufficient time now remained to introduce new Conditions of Sale in Scotland for the 1979 Season. Mr. McArthur also explained NASPM's reason for an amendment to incorporate "subject to availability" into the Conditions.

BRITISH
POTATO
TRADES
CONSORTIUM:

Mr. Barr reported on the Meeting he and Mr. Lindsay attended in London on 12th February, 1979. There had been discussion of Common Measures (FEOGA Grants) under the English Scheme in course of preparation for submission to Brussels, from which it seemed the merchants were only now (and perhaps too late) becoming aware of preponderant co-operative bias. In respect of a possible Futures Market for Potatoes, two sub-Committees had been formed to report back by 14th March, 1979 (Mr. Barr explained that all the interest appeared to emanate from Broker pressure).

Other discussions had concerned Farm Gate Sales (again - now estimated at 30% of all retail sales - little can be done if a producer himself is selling his own produce, but an excellent National Federation paper gives guidance on possible counter-measures to the "lay-by" trade); Metrication; British Standards (paper sack specifications are to be retained); Rucip Seminar; E.E.C. Regime (no further forward - only France supports the U.K., but for political reasons only); and the European Union Congress 1979.

On this latter topic Mr. Barr reported it will be held at Aalborg Denmark on 29th, 30th and 31st May, 1979. While he had attended the last two events he would be unable to take part this year. He strongly recommended a Scottish presence and urged other Members of Council and/or Association Members to attend.

JOINT
CONSULTATIVE
COUNCIL:

Mr. Lindsay next reported on the Meeting he and Mr. Barr had attended in London on 12th February, 1979. On completion of early formalities the meeting had received a supply position report, including an explanation of different Ministry and P.M.B. surplus estimates, Scottish loading problems and Mr. Grieff's view that chilling of chitted English own-grown seed could generate increased demand for Scotch replacement. Prospective total plantings were indicated to be 172,000 (against the recommended 170,000) Hectares, but early crop intentions were given as 32,000 hectares (against 46,000 planted in 1978).

All supplies contracted under the Board's buying programmes are expected to be moved, despite January having been a bad month for stockfeed loadings, due to frost and road strike action. The second/

second buying programme was a "buy and hold" operation, the accumulated figure at the date of the meeting having been 150,000 tonnes.

In a lively discussion of Dressing Standards Inspections, severe criticism of the Board from a Retailers Committee representative had been very effectively countered by the Board's Chairman (Mr. Grantham). The Meeting had also considered a supplies flow chart which Mr. Lindsay recommended should be circulated to all Association MEMBERS and Council instructed the Secretariat accordingly.

ANY
OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) Sack Specifications - Mr. Barr explained the background and the Association's ongoing correspondence with DAFS in respect of former standards now discontinued.

(b) Late Soil Samples - Mr. Barr also explained a Member's difficulty in respect of rented land and the Association's correspondence with DAFS in the matter. Council's discussion indicated that a successful outcome could be difficult to achieve.

(c) Plant Royalty Bureau - Mr. Blackmore reported the context of a letter from a member requesting the Association to take up the matter of the burden of plant royalties, particularly with regard to the 20 year protection period. Council's discussion proceeded from the Association's experiences of its own past efforts in Meetings etc. on this subject and ranged over various means of alleviating the problem, notwithstanding the Association's rejection of tonnage-based royalties in the past. Council agreed that the "protection period" should be ascertained and that an analysis of past years' total royalty payments be prepared (a) with a view to issuing a Press Release for the English market and (b) in readiness to resist any possible increase in present royalty rates.

(d) Membership - Mr. Blackmore tabled two notifications of applications for P.M.B. Ware Merchant's licences (Farm Products Cullen and A.C. Macdonald, Inverness) and reported the views of Messrs. J.P. Deuchar and W. Gordon respectively which he had obtained by telephone. Council agreed that once official notification of the granting of Licences is received these applicants be invited to become Association Members.

(e) Subscriptions - Mr. Blackmore next reported having received payment of 93 Subscriptions (80.17% of membership) totalling £3,888.89 in the six weeks since subscription slips were sent out. 23 subscriptions were outstanding which, without further tonnage bracket changes or resignations, should yield a further £894, to provide a total for 1978/79 of £4,782.89. This is £54 more than estimated, reflecting 14 tonnage bracket changes that have already occurred (6 up 1 bracket each, 2 up 2 brackets each and 6 down 1 bracket each) to give a net 4 brackets increase at £12 - £13 each. Council felt this position was satisfactory and instructed separate reminders be sent to each of the 23 unpaid members

(f) Crop Loss Claim - In reply Mr. Blackmore explained that a transcript of the Bodmin case had not been obtained as expected. Council agreed the Court's decision could have serious implications as an established precedent for later cases and the Secretariat was instructed to make a direct approach to obtain a transcript of the case.

(g) Date of next Meeting - Council agreed that its next meeting be held in the Station Hotel, Perth at 12.30p.m. on Thursday, 19th April, 1979. The Press sub-Committee Members present also agreed to hold their next meeting at 8, Kinnoull Street, Perth at 2p.m. on Tuesday, 20th March, 1979. The Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements for both meetings.

John H. Barr.

A vote of thanks to the Chair then concluded the Meeting.