

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
held in the Station Hotel, PERTH at
2 p.m. on Friday, 30th May, 1980.

PRESENT: Messrs. J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J.G.H. Fenton, B. Fulton, J. Henderson, D.H. Lindsay, J.R. McArthur, T. McClung, K.A. McKenzie, J.O. Robertson and G. Smillie, with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Asst.) in attendance.

The President, Mr. D. Hendry Lindsay, occupied the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting. He first explained the one day postponement of the meeting had taken account of (and out of courtesy to) those Council members wishing to attend yesterday's Reduction Sale (by an Association Member).

He also spoke of the death of Mr. Ian McIver (Cupar-based Assistant Divisional Superintendent of the Potato Marketing Board) earlier this week. Council instructed the Secretary to write to Mrs. McIver, at the appropriate time, to convey the Association's condolences.

APOLOGIES: Mr. Hunter intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. A.J. Allan, J.H. Barr, G. Brass, J.E. Cook, J. Fordyce, J. George, W. Gordon, D. Maxwell and J. Waddell (the Chairman explaining the latter is representing the Association at today's meeting with British Rail in London.)

MINUTES: The Chairman explained that the Minute of Meeting of Council in Perth on 11th March, 1980 had not been formally approved due to lack of a quorum at the following Meeting of Council in Perth on 17th April, 1980. Since the next following (special) meeting on 5th May, 1980 had deferred all routine business, all three Minutes (which had been pre-copied to all Council Members) required consideration today.

The Minute of each Meeting in turn was separately approved by Council and duly signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(a) Membership and Subscriptions- Mr. Blackmore reported that contact had been re-established with R.E. Bailey & Sons (Perth) Ltd. following their change of address. Their 1980 Subscription had now been received. James Mair, Esq., of Darvel, however, had not responded to a further reminder and his membership had been suspended, therefore, as instructed.

He also reported receipt of notification that Sinclair Dundas (Potatoes), Montrose had applied to the P.M.B. for a merchant's licence. Council agreed to await any application for Association Membership from this company in due course.

(b) P.M.B. Registration of Packing Stations - Council considered the secretariat's pre-circulated Note to Clarify this matter. Mr. Blackmore also read a short Press item of this date reporting public concern by the P.M.B. Chairman (Mr. Grantham) that P.M.B. Standards cannot be applied to imported ware potatoes. Mr. Henderson also explained that his original enquiry stemmed from his concern over possible loopholes in the tuber-pest and disease controls, rather than grading considerations.

In respect that the new Plant Health Frontier Control Regulations were now in force, that the Consortium had written the Ministry on the grading of imports and that the P.M.B. is clearly aware of this latter problem, Council agreed it should take no action at this time.

(c)/

(c) Proposed changes in the Certification Scheme - Council next considered a resumé paper on this matter prepared and precirculated by the Secretariat. In a long and careful discussion Council agreed the following points as Association policy in readiness for the next meeting of the Seed Trade Committee and that Committee's (later) joint response to D.A.F.S' proposals:-

(i) Tuber Standards - The tolerance for frost and for soft rots should be reduced from 1% to 0.5%

(ii) Grading inspections - Insufficient number of "on farm" inspections. Such inspections should be much increased before considering whether any increase in label costs is justified.

(iii) Plant Health - Tolerances for Blackleg and Mild Mosaic should not be changed, the former particularly until D.A.F.S. is able to provide blackleg-free material through the V.T.S.C. Scheme.

(iv) Uncertified seed - Pressure must be maintained on D.A.F.S to introduce a progressive, area-by-area, ban on the planting of such seed on Scottish farms.

(v) Fundamental changes - V.T.S.C. growing should be restricted to a raiser's own production only. Buying in for growing with a raiser's own stock, whether on the same farm but certainly in the same field, should be prohibited. (Note:- this matter to be discussed by the Seed Trade Committee only, and not at the subsequent response to D.A.F.S. in this context.)

- F.S. There should be no change made to the existing arrangements. Discontinuation of FS4 to be acceptable only in the event of strong pressure for it from other constituent bodies within the Seed Trade Committee.

(vi) Export Grading Stations - Could fill a longer term need but opposed to D.A.F.S. being the licensing authority.

(d) Down-labelling for Export - Council gave further consideration to the point raised by Mr. Barr during his Report to Council on 17th April, 1980 on the N.S.D.O. Consultative Committee Meeting held three days previously. It was felt that the Scottish Seed Trade should not become involved in exporting "certified" seed and it was agreed not to proceed further in the matter.

(e) Revision of Conditions of Sale - Mr. Hunter took up the two remaining points requiring clarification.

(i) "Payment due" date - To take account of the many variations known to exist within the trade it had been felt the provision in the present (old) Conditions had less than total relevance. It had been omitted from the revised Conditions, therefore, in favour of advising each Member to ensure that the Sale Note and/or the Invoice specified the date on which payment is due (and beyond which interest would become chargeable).

After some discussion Council agreed that "unless otherwise specified, payment within 28 days from the date of delivery" be incorporated into the revised Conditions.

(ii) Strikes - Mr. Hunter had considered the suggested amended wording on 17th April, 1980. In his view, omission of the words "and the buyer" (inserted to counter N.F.U. criticism) from the (new) Condition 16 would diminish its "reasonableness" and the alternative, insertion of the phrase "subject to their mutual agreement", is not appropriate. His professional opinion was that the Condition as worded would stand, on practicalities.

Council/

Council formally adopted the revised Conditions of Sale and recommended their introduction by all Association Members as soon as each of them finds it practicable to do so. After discussion it was agreed the Secretariat arrange with a printer to prepare a block and print enough copies to provide a few specimens for each Association Member and to N.A.S.P.M. and to N.F.U.S, these costs being met by the Association.

It was further agreed to arrange for the printer to retain the block and to notify each Member of the name and address of the printer, for each of them to arrange direct at their own cost for their own printing (plus insertion of the member's own name) whether on their own stationery, adhesive paper, or otherwise.

After further discussion it was also agreed to ask the "Conditions" sub-Committee as a matter of urgency to prepare and submit a similar revision of the Association's Conditions of Purchase.

Mr. Hunter also sought Council's Views on the "Conditions" sub-Committee's recommendation that special Conditions of Sale and Conditions of Purchase, for use between growers and merchants who are to export the seed potatoes, should be drawn up. Council accepted this recommendation and (in recognition of the specialised export trade knowledge that would be required in this connection) formally appointed Mr. J.R. McArthur to serve on the "Conditions" sub-Committee, The sub-Committee was also formally empowered to co-opt additional Association export trade members, whether Council members or not, as may be required.

(f) Scottish Seed Potato Association - Discussion of this matter began with the Chairman explaining he had been given to understand that, although analysis of the results of the S.S.P.A. poll of all Scottish seed potato producers was still not finalised, the position to date showed approximately 24% of producers (representing 35% of hectares certified in 1979) are opposed to the S.S.P.A.'s quest for statutory powers.

Various Council members pointed out the final poll results could never be other than suspect. On the grounds of being un-audited, the number of assumed "yes" votes, the number of producers who had never declared a view and so on, the method and timing of the poll had been sadly divisive. Concern was also voiced in respect of various press statements and other activities presuming the poll results even before voting had closed. One instance was also cited of several local producers being unaware this week, after voting had closed, that they had even received a polling slip.

Consideration of Council's future response led to very prolonged and wide-ranging discussions. It was agreed there should be a determined attempt to establish accurately the true support for and the opposition against statutory powers. A formal motion that the Association poll all producers was discussed at length. It was thereafter withdrawn in favour of a unanimous decision to poll all Association members only in first instance. It was agreed each member be asked to state whether in his view Council should support the formation of a government-appointed body with statutory powers to raise levies to promote Scottish Seed Potatoes (the actual wording to be finalised by the Secretary) and that, as well as providing for a simple "yes" or "no" decision, the voting slip should require each member to state the number of hectares he has entered for the 1980 Crop Inspections.

BRITISH
POTATO
TRADES
CONSORTIUM:

Mr. Lindsay's Report on the Consortium meeting which he had attended in London 8th May, 1980 had already been copied to each member of Council. In consideration of it, Council's discussion centred on the Consortium's intended recommendation to the P.M.B. that in a surplus year the standard riddle for calculating the surplus should be changed from 40 mm to 45 mm.

Mr. Robertson reminded Council that many years ago the Association had/

had successfully concluded a prolonged campaign to standardise the bottom riddle at 40 mm. This had ended manipulation of surpluses, a practice that encouraged ware growers to retain seed from their own crops which, in turn, further depressed seed prices already lowered by a surplus situation. He urged Council not to surrender the Association's earlier success in this respect.

Council agreed unanimously to oppose the Consortium's recommendation. The Secretariat was instructed to write the Consortium accordingly and to explain the above argument and to send a copy of the letter to N.A.S.P.M. for information.

In respect that the Report recorded discussion of S.S.P.A. matters, Mr. Doig questioned the relevance of "south-of-th-border" concern. Mr. Lindsay explained the Consortium meeting had asked him to report developments. After discussion Council agreed not to press for Consortium support in these matters.

ENTERTAINMENTS COMMITTEE:

The Chairman reported briefly on the Entertainments Committee meeting held in Perth on 15th May, 1980. As well as finalisation of the Golf Outing arrangements (now successfully past), provisional applications for Curling Match bookings at Perth Rink had been agreed subject to revision if facilities become available to play one leg elsewhere. Annual Dinner/Dance matters had been considered (and provisional bookings had since been made for the 1981 function). In conclusion, Mr. Lindsay also reported that the total party for the Association trip to Holland next week now numbered thirty.

ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS:

(a) Ware Grading Standards from 1/1/80 - Council considered a letter from the P.M.B. (copies precirculated to Council members) inviting comments on proposed changes. It was the unanimous view of Council that one standard minimum riddle only should be applied throughout the Season. In particular it was agreed that clause (c)(ii) of the Board's proposals should be deleted. The Secretary was instructed to write in reply accordingly before the next Joint Consultative Meeting (on 9th June, 1980) and to provide Mr. Fenton with a copy of that letter.

(b) Excess Levy on crops grown for export - The Secretary read a letter from a member who had resisted payment of excess levy to the P.M.B. claiming that he had exported a far greater tonnage of potatoes than had been produced on the excess acreage he had grown. Maintaining that far from his excess growing contributing to any national surplus (especially when unrestricted imports are allowed), his export efforts had both reduced any such surplus and earned foreign currency. The excess levy was therefore a dis-incentive to export and against the national interest.

Council expressed every sympathy with the logic of the member's views but pointed out that the excess acreage levy regulations had operated for many years and were well known to all growers before planting was undertaken. The Secretary was instructed to convey these views in reply to the member concerned.

(c) Potato Futures Market - The Chairman explained that the Futures Market is to commence trading on 16th June, 1980 and first Contracts would end in November 1980. He was concerned that provision of stores in Scotland for physical stocks under Contracts not "closed out" could be behind schedule. Although storekeepers application forms are now available, supplies promised to the Association had not come to hand. The Secretariat undertook to expedite circularisation of a form to each Association member as soon as possible.

(d) Early Growers' Meeting - The Secretary reported he had received no word from the Early Growers Association regarding the usual pre-lifting meeting. Mr. McClung explained a Meeting is not to be held this year principally due to lack of support both last year and now.

(e) Powdery Scab tolerance/

(e) Powdery Scab tolerance - The Secretary reported receipt of a letter from a member who had had three consignments of Pentland Crown AAl seed rejected in Lancashire for powdery scab. In one case a P.M.B Report confirmed that the level was within the 3% tolerance permitted by the Seed Potato Regulations 1978 (which are applicable throughout the U.K.) The member understands, however, that Ministry of Agriculture staff in that area had advised growers there to reject any seed delivered to them which showed any powdery scab whatsoever.

Following discussion the Secretary was instructed to write to the Ministry of Agriculture for its clarification and comments in the matter and to send a copy of his letter to D.A.F.S for information.

(f) EUCARPIA Conference - In respect of the Association's previously authorised contribution to this event, Mr. Blackmore read from a letter from Dr. Holden seeking approval of the wording of the acknowledgements to be printed on the formal Menu. Council approved the proposed wording.

(g) Date of next meeting - It was agreed the next meeting of Council will take place in the Station Hotel, Perth at 12.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 1st July, 1980 and the Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

The Meeting then closed with a Vote of Thanks to the Chair.

D. M. R. R. R.