

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
in the Station Hotel, PERTH at 11 a.m.
on FRIDAY, 23rd JANUARY, 1981

PRESENT:

Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.C. Cook, R. Doig, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Fordyce, W. Gordon, J. Henderson, D.H. Lindsay, D. Maxwell, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, J. Logan Milne, R. Ramsay, G. Smillie and J.M. Waddell, with B. McDiarmid, R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

The President, Mr. D. Hendry Lindsay, occupied the Chair.

APOLOGIES:

Mr. Blackmore intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. A.J. Allan, J.P. Deuchar, B. Fulton, T. McClung and J.O. Robertson.

BUSINESS:

Before proceeding to the main purpose of today's special meeting the Chairman referred briefly to N.A.S.P.M.'s intention to licence S.P.T.A. in respect of copyright of Conditions of Sale. The Secretary explained the draft licence was awaited for perusal.

Mr. Barr reported briefly on the N.S.D.O. Working Party meeting he had attended in London on 19th January, 1981. Chaired by Mr. Barclay Forrest (who seemed determined to cede nothing) the meeting was notable for the excellent single trade voice. The P.M.B. had offered financial assistance to the proposed new Committee if it is formed but N.S.D.O.'s decision had to await a meeting of its Board later that week. Mr. Barr's impression was that N.S.D.O. will not surrender any part of its powers to any Committee and, clearly lacking any effective representational voice, he questioned the usefulness of continued S.P.T.A. attendance at N.S.D.O. meetings.

Mr. Gordon referred to the present serious difficulties of meeting currently-due Royalty Payments and sought support for the widespread with-holding of payments. While Council had every sympathy in this respect it could not associate itself officially with such action, especially while exploring other means of relieving the situation.

ASSOCIATION
POLICY:

Briefly recalling recent developments and the need to review and define this Association's policy in this respect, in readiness for joint discussions with Council of S.S.P.A. this afternoon, the Chairman called on Mr. McArthur to speak to a short Paper he had prepared.

Mr. McArthur stressed the Paper expressed his own thoughts on why the potato industry is where it is today. Enlarging on several points he summarised the matter by stating the immediate solution lay in reduction of the area grown. In his view D.A.F.S. will do this for the industry but for non-commercial reasons. Ensuing discussion expressed the views that the industry can and will continue to supply the home market; that few take part in export markets to increase which requires greater incentive (whether from government or through labels-charges route); past despatches of higher-grades seed to the south has encouraged increased planting of one-grown seed there (especially in a bad year); increased yields have led to greater volume from reduced planting; plantings could be reduced in Scotland by reducing the P.M.B. quota acreage.

Opposition to levy-supported direct-selling by individuals under S.S.P.A. cloak was voiced, along with a call for S.S.P.A. to concentrate its members' efforts on growing for export. It was noted that compared to the Dutch, Scottish procurement in a free market militates against Scottish exporters and it was also felt that S.S.P.A. efforts, like those of D.A.F.S. (which must be prevailed upon to be more commercially oriented) served to increase rather than to reduce fragmentation within the Scottish Seed Potato industry.

Responding to the Chairman's call to deal first with the home market/

market and promotion within it, it was stated that a ban on the planting of uncertified seed would both increase the demand for seed and reduce plantings. Down-labelling facilities would reduce planting of once-grown seed and thus also increase seed demand. It was agreed that with the home market absorbing 80% of Scottish seed production, it would be most imprudent to sit back without effort to maintain this position. It was felt that promotion at home would be largely ineffective and S.S.P.A. seemed unsure of where it was going but, if their planned promotion were to be wholly export-oriented, S.P.T.A. could go along with them. It was pointed out this represented S.S.P.A.'s own expressed views and that recent S.S.P.A. representation in the south had not been disruptive but solely to counter N.E.V.A. activities there. There was again support for a call for an end to "them and us" attitudes and support was also voiced for the labels-incentive idea. Additionally, it was felt exporters need protection as well as incentive.

In reply to the Chair it was stated that support for current government-inspired centralised marketing initiatives was not possible within S.S.P.A.'s Constitution but strong pressure from S.A.O.S. and others to control the market which might lead to such powers being granted to the proposed statutory body once it was set up was an extremely worrying possibility. It was considered if, since the two Associations seemed to be moving towards agreement, S.P.T.A. could secure the right to nominate the merchant representation on the proposed Development Council. It was agreed that Council must decide today whether S.P.T.A. is to support or fight the formation of a Development Council. Given the option of supporting it or having it imposed it was agreed S.P.T.A. must secure the strongest representation on it, which could not be secured from an opposed position.

Discussion of S.S.P.A.'s invitation for Council's views on the best ways to use the government's grant of £50,000 to S.S.P.A. was opened with a brief resume of S.S.P.A.'s thoughts in the matter. Alternative to the proposed feasibility study, Council gave some support to a suggestion that it be used to buy breeders' rights from N.S.D.O.

In conclusion of discussions it was formally moved by Mr. Fenton and seconded by Mr. Barr "that Council agrees in principle to go forward to discuss terms with S.S.P.A. to see if S.P.T.A. can in any way support S.S.P.A. in pursuit of its aim to achieve Development Council status." No amendment or counter motion was proposed and in a formal vote the motion was carried by 11 votes in favour and 4 votes against. It was also agreed to recommend the grant be used to finance a feasibility study, in full consultation with the Trade, to define how best to expend levied funds on promotion.

The meeting was thereupon concluded.

D. H. Rankin