

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
in the Ice Rink, PERTH at 11 a.m. on
Friday, 5th MARCH, 1982.

PRESENT: Messrs. A.J. Allan, J.G.H. Fenton, J. Fordyce, D.H. Lindsay, D. Maxwell, J.L. Milne, W.E. Muirhead, J.R. McArthur, K.A. McKenzie, J.O. Robertson and G. Smillie, with R. David Hunter (Secretary) and D. Blackmore (Assistant) in attendance.

The President Mr. J.G.H. Fenton took the Chair and welcomed those present.

APOLOGIES: Mr. Hunter submitted apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. J.H. Barr, J.E. Cook, J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, B. Fulton, W. Gordon, J. Henderson, T. McClung and R.G. Ramsay.

MINUTES: The Minute of Meeting of Council in Perth on 14th January, 1982 (copies of which had been sent to each Member of Council) was taken as read. It was formally approved and duly signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING: (a) Conditions of Purchase - The Secretary reported that no response was yet to hand from the National Farmers Union of Scotland.

The Secretary confirmed that the Conditions sub-Committee's remit to frame Conditions for exports and for the ware trade will be put in early train.

(b) Proposed Scottish potato research station - It was reported that this matter had not been raised at the P.M.B. meeting or at the Seed Trade Committee meeting as had been suggested. Council confirmed that the matter be discussed with the N.F.U.S. at the first opportunity (possibly at the Working Party meeting in Perth on 9th March).

(c) NASPM Arbitration Rules - The Secretary reported that a copy of the final draft of the revised Rules had not been received.

BRITISH POTATO TRADES CONSORTIUM: The Chairman reported briefly on the meeting of the Consortium in London on 1st February, 1982 which he and Mr. McArthur had attended. The 1981 Accounts submitted showed S.P.T.A.'s 11% share of expenses to be £81.39 and of the 1982 subscription to the European Union to be £151.80. He explained the meeting had felt that the latter Subscription should be continued at least until the E.E.C. Potato Regime negotiations were determined. His copy of the Consortium Accounts was passed to the Secretariat for attention.

JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE: Council considered the Chairman's pre-circulated Report on the Joint Consultative Committee meeting which he and Mr. McArthur had attended in London on 1st February, 1982. Each Member of Council had also received a copy of the Board's own Report on this same meeting.

The proposed changes in the Board's Ware Standards for 1983 (being ^{the} subject of a separate letter since to hand from the Board) was deferred for full discussion later today. The rest of both Reports were duly noted without further comment by Council.

N.S.D.O. Council considered Mr. Barr's pre-circulated Report on the meeting with the National Seed Development Organisation which he had attended in London on 17th February, 1982. It was noted that the N.S.D.O. Board's approval to increase the Royalty Rates for Basic classes of its protected varieties to £60 per hectare for the 1983 Crop is awaited.

Following discussion Council agreed to continue to support index linking of Royalty Rates and their being levied on a hectare (not a tonnage)/

tonnage) basis. The Secretariat was instructed to write N.S.D.O. (with Mr. Barr's approval) in these terms.

SEED
POTATO
CONSULTATIVE
PANEL:

Mr. McArthur reported on the meeting of the Consultative Panel which he and Mr. Fenton had attended in Edinburgh on 19th February, 1982. (Mr. Blackmore apologised for his non-attendance, which precluded the intended pre-circularisation of a written Report on this meeting). He explained D.A.F.S. had issued three Papers and draft revised Regulations (together totalling 59 pages) prior to the meeting for consideration. A fourth Paper (the February letter to Growers) had not been issued by today's date.

Dealing first with proposed PCN (Eelworm) changes applicable for the 1983 Crop onwards, Mr. McArthur stated the minimum permitted area for testing is to be 2 hectares (if not the whole field), not 4 hectares as originally intended by D.A.F.S. Part-field exclusions must be fenced and D.A.F.S.' Mr. Mabbot continued to insist that any exclusions must be permanently fenced. A further Working Party meeting will take place in Perth on 9th March to try to reach agreement on this point but Mr. McArthur was not hopeful that D.A.F.S. could be persuaded of the impracticability of its insistence. He quoted test results statistics (from D.A.F.S.' 1st Paper) and although not specifically stated, it is clear that D.A.F.S. does not want potatoes grown where non-viable cysts have been found.

Council's discussion noted that D.A.F.S.' tests results statistics did not include prior withdrawals resulting from Agricultural Colleges tests. While it was agreed the main problems were mostly confined to small fields and that it appears to be D.A.F.S.' intention to take these out of potato production altogether, it was felt this must be resisted; costs alone would be prohibitive and a scheme that could not be properly policed/enforced will not solve the problems. Mr. Fenton added that if a part field is scheduled, only resistant varieties may be planted in the adjacent four hectares. On this point, one Council member stated he had been subjected to this ruling for his 1982 planting and it was agreed this should be investigated.

Reporting on proposed amendment of the Seed Potato Regulations Mr. McArthur explained D.A.F.S. intends to introduce a definition of a seed potato. It was agreed the tolerance for size faults will be reduced from 4% to 3% overall, permitting any combination of undersized and/ or oversized within that tolerance. D.A.F.S. is also to incorporate power to direct the holder to remove the official labels from any returned or rejected stocks. After prolonged discussion the Panel had agreed to increase the tolerance for powdery scab to include its cankerous form from 3% to 4% (after removing this form from any possible inclusion within the "mis-shapen" category). In respect of de-scheduling of land, D.A.F.S. proposed that six years must elapse between finding a live cyst and the planting of seed potatoes. Minor changes will also be made to V.T.S.C. regulations to provide for inclusion of micro-propogated stocks.

Mr. Fenton explained the history of discussions on the name to be used for the present AAL class after its improvement. As the matter was left it appears that D.A.F.S. and M.A.F.F. will have to make the final decision which, Mr. McArthur added, seemed likely to be for "Super A" rather than "Elite". On tuber inspections again, it had been agreed to reduce the tolerance for dirt etc. from 2% to 1% and to include frost damage within the tolerance for soft rots.

In respect of D.A.F.S.' Paper 3 (1981 Inspection Statistics) Council's attention was drawn to the number of temporary inspectors employed, reduction of rejections (although including marked increases in the incidence of groundkeepers and rogues and a halving of the area rejected for blackleg) compared with 1980 crop, and the total scheduled area (10,582 hectares). It was agreed the Secretariat send a copy of Paper 3 to all members of Council.

The/

The Panel had been advised that D.A.F.S. "February letter to Growers" will notify the intention to increase the number of permanently employed inspectors, to require all V.T.S.C. stocks to be chemically treated (Mr. McKenzie opposed this - his own several years experience had not proved a conclusive case either way), to increase the growing crop inspection fees by £2 per half-hectare and charges for labels from 80p to £1.00 per tonne.

Council noted that inspection fees (increased by 33% from £9 to £12 per hectare between 1980 and 1981) are to be increased again by a further 33%, (I.E. from £12 to £16 per hectare) for the 1982 crop and a 25% increase applied to label charges also. Concern was expressed that these increases are, respectively, almost three times and twice the current rate of inflation and are applied without any prior consultative opportunity. Council agreed S.P.T.A. should maintain maximum opposition to these increases and methods and the Secretariat was instructed to write to the Department accordingly.

SEED
TRADE
COMMITTEE:

In considering the pre-circulated Report on the meeting of the Seed Trade Committee in Edinburgh on 11th February, 1982 (in preparation for the Consultative Panel meeting reported above) the Chairman explained most of the points had now been updated. In reply, Mr. McArthur stated that compulsory burning down (to be completed within 21 days of final inspection) is to be extended in 1982 to all FS crops (classes 1,2,3 and 4) of early varieties only; that "banking" of PCN tests is likely to be extended to 3 or 4 years and that D.A.F.S. had been un-helpful in respect of proposals to introduce an official frost loading ban for exports. After a lively discussion of this latter point Council agreed to maintain pressure on D.A.F.S. via the Seed Trade Committee, the new Development Council and the P.M.B.'s Export Development Committee. To this end the matter is to be placed on the Agenda for future meetings of Council and of those other Committees and Council.

ENTERTAINMENTS
COMMITTEE:

The Secretary reported briefly on the meeting of the Entertainments Committee in Perth on 26th February, 1982 which had considered the draft 1981 Dinner-Dance account, today's Curling Match, the 1982 Golf Outing to Gleneagles (Thursday, 20th May) and the proposed 1982 visit to the eastern seaboard of the U.S.A. He gave a brief outline of Stita's interim proposals and costs and Mr. Blackmore similarly outlined Grampian Travel's interim response. Council agreed the Committee pursue these matters promptly.

ANY OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS

(a) Proposed 1983 Ware Standards - In considering the P.M.B.'s letter of 26th February, 1982 the Chairman explained the Board has indicated that the proposed amended sizing standards will not necessarily impair future buying programmes. Mr. Blackmore also reported Mr. Fulton's telephoned views of Members. Council agreed to resist any raising of the minimum and/or maximum sizes for the 1983 Ordinary Ware standard and to propose instead that the present minimum size (40 mm) be reduced to 35 mm. with a minimum of 30 mm. between bottom and top riddles (providing fairer competition with Continental practice). For the proposed new Premium Grade Council agreed a 45 mm. minimum size, with 40 mm. band sizing, would be acceptable. The Secretariat was instructed to write to the Board accordingly and to send a copy to the Consortium for information.

Council also briefly considered the Board's suggested Publicity Campaign for the proposed new Premium Grade (to be introduced initially in Scotland in October, 1982). Messrs. Fenton and McArthur intended to be present at a meeting in London on 22nd March, 1982 to consider these suggestions and Council agreed they (and any other S.P.T.A. Members there) should attend on a "watch, listen and report back" basis.

(b) Variety "Corine" - The Chairman and Mr. McArthur explained the history of the importation of "Corine" seed potatoes from Holland into England/

England at end October/early November 1981 and the subsequent (end January 1982) diagnosis, by the Commonwealth Micrological Institute at Harpenden, that part of these consignments were (believed) infected with a non-U.K.-indigenous type of dry rot (*Fusarium trichothecoides*).

Mr. Blackmore provided further detailed "question and answer" information obtained from the Ministry of Food the previous afternoon in which he reported that results of further joint U.K./Dutch scientific sample culturing tests (on which any necessary decisions would be based) were now not expected to become available until Monday next (8th March). The ensuing lengthy discussion disclosed a strong feeling among Council members that a "political cover up" was in progress. In response to a proposal to enlist Press assistance the matter was remitted to the Public Relations Committee for further attention and appropriate action.

(c) Exports rejections problems - The Chairman explained he had received requests from Members for S.P.T.A. assistance with problems arising from rejection of exports. Council gave careful consideration to the many factors involved and various alternatives were fully discussed, none of which received the unanimous support of those present. In these circumstances it was agreed Council could take no useful action at this time.

(d) Membership and Annual Subscriptions - Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of a formal resignation from John Hogarth Ltd. and formal notification from J.E. England & Sons (Wellington) Ltd. and West Cumberland Farmers Ltd. that their memberships had been combined into a single membership in the new name of Strathmore Farmers Ltd. Following his enquiries into outstanding Subscriptions he had learned that D. McDowall Ltd., Ardrossan are to write confirming their intention not to renew their Membership and that R.E. Bailley & Sons (Perth) Ltd. are to write to confirm having merged (and combined their membership) with Glendale Potato Co. Ltd.

Mr. Blackmore explained these changes reduced the Association's Membership Roll from 118 at 1st November, 1981 to 114 now, of whom 103 (90.35%) have already paid their current year's Subscription (compared with 74.2% at the equivalent date last year). Of the remaining 11 members he had so far been unable to contact only four but would continue his efforts to rectify this.

(e) Date of next meeting - After a brief discussion it was agreed to hold Council's next meeting in the Station Hotel, Perth at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 6th May, 1982 and the Secretariat was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

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