

MINUTE of MEETING of COUNCIL of the
SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION
held in the Ice Rink, PERTH at 12 Noon
on Friday, 4th MARCH, 1983

PRESENT:

Messrs. A.J. Allan, J.H. Barr, J.E. Cook, J.G.H. Fenton, B. Fulton, D.H. Lindsay, D. Maxwell, P. Miller, J. Logan 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.

Mr. J.G.H. Fenton (President) took the Chair and welcomed those present to the meeting.

APOLOGIES:

The Secretary intimated apologies for absence on behalf of Messrs. J.P. Deuchar, R. Doig, J. Henderson and T. McClung.

MINUTES:

The Minute of Meeting of Council in Perth on 13th January, 1983 (a copy of which had been sent to each Member of Council) was taken as read. It was duly approved and signed to this effect by the Chairman.

MATTERS
ARISING:

(a) Conditions of Purchase - The Secretary reported that his revised version of Condition 17 had been submitted to the NFUS for consideration prior to the meeting of the Seed Trade Committee on 3rd February, 1983 at which a hoped for opportunity for discussion had not occurred. A written response was now being sought.

(b) Membership and Subscriptions - Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of a letter of resignation from Messrs. Powrie Bros. and information that Eskfood (Angus) Ltd. and Potato Exports Ltd. were now in Receivership and in Liquidation respectively. Council noted the resignation and instructed deletion of Potato Exports Ltd. from the Membership Roll. It was thought possible that Eskfood (Angus) Ltd. might recover later.

Mr. Blackmore also reported receipt of P.M.B. Notices that Fife Fruit Sales, Glenrothes and Messrs. Anderson, Braid & Baxter, Methil have applied for Ware Merchants Licences. Council decided not to send invitations to Association Membership to these firms meantime.

The Chairman reported his understanding that Nickersons Seed Potatoes wished to join the Association. The Secretary explained this Company's earlier application for Association Membership (in 1976) had been declined. Since that date and along with its internal changes, this Company had established an office in Perth (in 1979). Council agreed an invitation to apply for Association Membership be sent to this Company.

Mr. Blackmore reported receipt of Subscriptions from 90 Members (totalling £7,465) since Notices were sent out seven weeks ago. This was 11 fewer (and £1,040 less) than at the corresponding date last year, subscription rates being the same in both years. Council agreed pressure should be applied to secure earliest payment of all outstanding subscriptions.

The Secretary reported that one very marked change of tonnage brackets had occurred which clearly breached the reliance on Members' honest goodwill. After brief discussion the Secretary was instructed to pursue the matter with the Member concerned.

(c) "Cabbage Seed" Appeal Judgement - Mr. Hunter explained he had duly received and studied a full copy of this Judgement. His principal observation was that the terms and Conditions of Sale used by the seller had not been previously negotiated with the buyers' organisation(s). The Judgement affirmed the Courts' duty to decide whether Conditions used are fair and reasonable and made a passing reference to the seller's lack of insurance cover. During a brief discussion Council agreed the Secretary/

Secretary should investigate the possibility of arranging a "blanket" type cover by the Association for its Members.

(d) True Potato Seed - Mr. Blackmore reported that his letter seeking DAFS' views in this matter had been delayed and a reply had not yet been received.

(e) Average Prices "Blueprint" - Mr. Blackmore also reported the content of his telephoned enquiries and discussion with Mr. Dadson of the P.M.B. While no formula is required to calculate an average (which is published in the Board's Market Report) and no "blueprint", as such, is known to exist, it had been agreed that a specimen copy of an internally available Board's computer "print-out" will be forwarded to the Association for perusal. It was agreed this should be copied to each Member of Council when received.

(f) Resignations from Council - (1) In addition to Mr. Ramsay's resignation at the last meeting of Council, the Secretary reported that Mr. Gordon had since written to confirm he was no longer a Director of John O. Gordon Ltd. and thus not eligible to continue as a member of Council for the Inverness/Ross and Cromarty district.

During discussion Mr. Hunter pointed out that the Association's Constitution and Rules provided Council with power to co-opt to fill vacancies, but the meeting decided to leave both vacancies to be filled at the next election. A decision on whether to circularise all members in the northern area to seek a candidate for election was deferred until Council's next meeting.

(2) Following his resignation from Council and deletion of his Company's name from the Association's Membership Roll, Council considered Mr. Ramsay's position as one of the Association's trade representative nominees appointed to the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council. Recognising that the Statutory Order setting up the Development Council does not provide for replacement of representatives before expiry of their three-year appointment, Council agreed the matter should be taken up. The Secretary was instructed to convey Council's views in writing to DAFS in the first instance. It was further agreed to defer submission of nominations for a replacement for Mr. Ramsay until being asked to do so.

(3) Mr. McArthur announced, with sincere regret, his decision to resign as Vice President of the Association. He explained the necessity for this decision, arising from much increased pressure of his other business commitments, had become increasingly clear of late and he was concerned to provide Council with as much notice of this change as possible. Following a brief discussion Mr. McArthur agreed his resignation would become fully effective on 31st October, 1983.

(g) Press Releases - In reply to Mr. Hunter, Mr. McKenzie confirmed the intention to prepare a further Press Release, following today's meeting, for publication early next week.

"GREAT
BRITS"
SCHEME:

The Chairman reported on the meeting of the P.M.B. with trade representatives in Perth on 27th January, 1983. While the meeting had provided useful discussion there had been a certain lack of clarity on the future of the Scheme. It had been reported that a total of 4,000 tonnes of "Great Brits" had been marketed since the inception of the Scheme, while £176,000 had been expended on promotional costs. The view was expressed to Council that it would have been more useful if the £1m. devoted to television advertising had been used to finance a stockfeed programme in Scotland. It was also felt to be a foregone conclusion that the Scheme would be extended into subsequent Seasons and it was agreed to await developments. In response to a suggestion that the Association should make some comment on the Scheme, it was agreed this would be included in the next Press Release to counter recent public criticism of the Scheme by a supermarket spokesman.

BRITISH
POTATO
TRADES
CONSORTIUM:

Council took note of pre-circulated papers in connection with the meeting of the Consortium held in London on 31st January, 1983. In enlargement thereof, Mr. Fenton confirmed that the Consortium's resignation from membership of the European Union had been formally withdrawn, this decision to be reviewed in November, 1983. He reported that copies of the first European Union "Bulletin" (under the "improved communications" arrangements) had now been received.

The Consortium had also learned that neither the S.S.P.D.C. nor the N.I. Seed Production Co. had accepted Solanex's vague, financially unacceptable, participatory proposals. Council's brief discussion of this point was inconclusive.

Mr. McArthur reported that Mr. Fenton had been elected as Chairman of the Consortium for 1983 and Council congratulated Mr. Fenton on this event.

JOINT
CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE:

Pre-circulated copies of the P.M.B.'s Report on the meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee in London on 31st January, 1983 were taken as read. Additionally, Mr. Fenton reported having learned that at the date of the meeting, current U.K. consumption had been calculated as 106.7Kg. per head. Mr. McArthur also reported the gut feeling held by the trade representatives that a surplus supply existed. Mr. Pooley had left before conclusion of the meeting.

SEED TRADE
COMMITTEE:

Council noted the pre-circulated copies of the Secretariat's Report on the meeting of the informal joint Seed Trade Committee, held in Perth on 3rd February, 1983 in readiness for the meeting of the Seed Potato Consultative Panel in Edinburgh the following day.

SEED POTATO
CONSULTATIVE
PANEL:

During its point by point consideration of the Secretariat's pre-circulated Report on the meeting of the Consultative Panel in Edinburgh on 4th February, 1983 Mr. McArthur explained the proposed revisions in respect of soil testing for P.C.N., especially in respect of the finding of dead cysts. D.A.F.S. had been persuaded to consider modifying its proposals on planting resistant varieties from a mandatory to a recommended basis. Council's views included a suggestion that increasing complexity of P.C.N. test criteria required preparation of explanatory notes, as well as an opinion that although the proposals were not liked, D.A.F.S. was nevertheless going the right way about achieving the objective.

In respect of the proposal to reduce the tolerance for Scab from one third to one quarter of the tuber surface area, it was agreed, after discussion to accept the proposal provided it applied to Powdery Scab at both points within the Regulations (17(6) and Schedule 5(1)).

Council noted that D.A.F.S. is to take up inclusion of "Super Elite" in nomenclature changes with MAFF and WOAD (Welsh Office Agriculture Department). Council also agreed that a protest against the announced increased cost of seed labels for Season 1983 would be useless but a suitable comment should be included in the next Press Release.

N.S.D.O.
CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Barr spoke briefly on his Report (copies of which had been pre-circulated to each Member of Council) of the meeting of the N.S.D.O. Consultative Committee, which he had attended in London on 16th February, 1983.

After re-discussion, collection of Royalties on a tonnage basis (likely £8 - £10 per tonne) had been rejected in favour of the status quo (acreage basis), with agreement to keep this matter under review.

Application of the agreed indexing formula required an increase of 8.4% in present Royalty rates for 1984 Season. Unanimous opposition by the trade and farming representatives successfully reduced this to 6.5% (£64 per ha. for basic seed, £56 per ha. for certified seed) subject to ratification by the N.S.D.O. Board, but Mr. Barr explained N.S.D.O. had indicated they would be looking to recover this reduction, in addition to an indexed increase, next time round.

"FOOD FROM
BRITAIN"
CONFERENCE:

Mr. Fulton highlighted the principal points of his pre-circulated Report on the launching conference for the "Food from Britain" Scheme. Principally the Scheme is intended to promote co-operative marketing of British food abroad. Funded by Government to the extent of £20m. over the first five years, the Scheme will be self-funding thereafter.

ENTERTAIN-
MENTS
COMMITTEE:

Mr. Miller reported that following recent meetings of the Entertainments Committee arrangements had been made to hold the Association's annual Golf Outing over the Rosemount Courses this year, on Tuesday, 17th May, 1983. The usual morning round North v. South Competition will be held under Stableford Rules this year. Full details will be circularised to all Members shortly.

The Committee had also arranged for the Association's next Dinner-Dance Function to take place in the Salutation Hotel, Perth on Friday, 27th January, 1984. The arrangements included a seated-service, in preference to a buffet-type meal.

In brief discussion of these changes Council approved the arrangements made. It was also agreed to consider a Foreign Study Tour to North Portugal in 1984 and this matter was remitted back to the Entertainments Committee to make the necessary enquiries.

ANY OTHER
COMPETENT
BUSINESS:

(a) P.M.B. "Processor" Buying Scheme - With Mr. Fulton's support Mr. Fenton explained he was aware of opposition within the Association in respect of the practical effects of the Board's scheme whereby processors are to buy an additional 50,000 tonnes of potatoes. This tonnage was to be released (at £45 per tonne) from producer stocks under contract to the Board (at £55 per tonne). It was intended this tonnage would be stored after processing, for release later in the year.

Mr. Cook also supported the points covered by Mr. Fenton and in the Press item reporting the views of the National Federation. The Scheme constituted a very serious interference in normal trade, made far worse by a subsidised selling price against which the trade could not possibly compete. After discussion, Council agreed the various aspects should be incorporated into a letter of strong protest to the Board and that a suitable comment be included in the Association's next Press Release.

(b) National Federation Annual Conference - The Secretary reported receipt of a letter intimating that this Conference is to take place in Glenagles Hotel from Thursday 20th to Sunday 23rd October, 1983 and suggesting Association sponsorship/hospitality. Council noted these dates and deferred the suggestion until its next meeting.

(c) U.K. Potato Marketing Conference - The Secretary further reported receipt of notification that Fresh Marketing Services Ltd. is organising a conference, sponsored by the Fruit Trades Journal, in the Royal Garden Hotel, London on 8th and 9th June, 1983. Council noted these dates pending receipt of further promised details.

(d) Seed Potato Development Council - Mr. Hunter pointed out that Council was not receiving regular, formal information on the Development Council's meetings and activities. To provide the Association's representatives on the Development Council with an opportunity to report back, it was agreed to include this matter in the Agenda for each future meeting of the Association's Council.

(e) Date of Next Meeting - After brief discussion, Council agreed to hold its next meeting in the Station Hotel, Perth at 2 p.m. on Thursday, 5th May, 1983 and the Secretariat was instructed to make the usual arrangements.

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