



THE SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION

Secretary and Treasurer R. DAVID HUNTER
Assistant Secretary D. I. Blackmore

25 South Methven Street Perth Scotland PH1 5ES
Tel. 20451 (STD 0738)

REPORT OF COUNCIL

of the

SCOTTISH POTATO TRADE ASSOCIATION

for the year to

31st OCTOBER, 1983

As reported at the last A.G.M., two resignations had reduced the total Membership Roll to 121 Members. In addition to four further resignations since that date, two Member Companies went into Voluntary Liquidation, one went into Receivership and one Member ceased trading. Offsetting these ten reductions three new Members were enrolled. Resulting from this net loss of 7 members during the year under review, the total Membership Roll now comprises 116 Members.

In respect of circularisations, two points need to be stressed again. First - News Letters remain the Association's principal means of contact with Members, Second - the often slow postal service virtually precludes despatch by second class mail. Although (compared with 1982) there was a 5% drop in the number of News Letters sent during the year under review, their content increased by 35%. Together with simultaneous and unavoidable increases in the costs of materials, etc. all these factors are reflected in the Association's Accounts. Very careful attention to containing these costs will continue at all times.

Among the very many topics occupying your Council's time and attention during the past year, the matter of imports of ware during a year of surplus supply was highlighted by a prolonged market "over-hang" by a sub-standard consignment from Cyprus. Regretably, by the time this was brought to Council's attention, corrective pressure could not be exerted. Nevertheless the unsatisfactory position of imported ware not being subject to PMB dressing standards is being pursued. Current initiatives could well provide opportunity to control this problem.

On behalf of Members your Council made strong representations to the PMB on two particular ware matters - the precipitate "release back" of stocks under contract to the Board and the Board's scheme for special, extra, supplies to processors. In its replies, the Board has undertaken to review both procedures for any future use.

The Board's issue of successive "Balance Sheets" for the 1982/83 crop estimating an "almost in balance" supply position, conflicted strongly with the Trade's own views. Whether or not this "totally informed market" policy achieved its objective, the whole exercise reinforced the view that (as in the other examples given above), "feed-back" of views from Members (to assist Council in formulation of policies and responses on all sorts of issues) should be improved. To this end, Council has recently determined to maximise the amount of information circularised to Members. This extended Report is but one (early) manifestation of this policy.

As Members will know, the Board's decision to continue the "Great Brits" Scheme in Scotland, but not to extend it into England as planned, reflects the anticipated peculiarities of the current Season's estimated supplies. Doubts seem to persist within the Trade as to whether eventual self-financing of the "Great Brits" Scheme can ever be achieved.

Reflecting previous prolonged efforts of the Association's "Conditions" sub-Committee the year under review saw the adoption and introduction of Association-copyright Conditions of Sale for Ware Potatoes (uptake by Members very limited, "feed-back" virtually nil) and of revised Conditions of Purchase for Seed Potatoes. Previous work on formulation of Conditions of Sale of Seed Potatoes (for Export) has not been progressed, /

progressed, pending response from the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council. That Council also now provides your Association with summarised activities reports from time to time, which are considered during meetings of your own Association's Council.

A good deal of time and careful effort has been devoted to safeguarding Members' interests in respect of revision and amendment of the 1978 Seed Potato Regulations. Intended for introduction in time to be applicable to the 1984 Crop, the principal changes are in respect of new classifications and certain disease tolerances.

Briefly, the former will comprise VTSC1 and VTSC2; "Super Elite" (formerly Foundation Stock) 1, 2 and 3; "Elite (mid-way between former FS4 and AAl classes) and AA. (As formerly, AA Class will remain ineligible for entry into the Scottish Growing Crops Inspections Scheme).

In respect of diseases, the tolerances for Blackleg will be reduced (widespread research effort in this respect continues apace) and Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN) testing arrangements have been considerably tightened up, initially in deference to overseas importers' requirements, but also designed with the best, longer-term, interest of the entire Scottish (seed and ware) potato crop in mind.

Inevitably, the House of Lords Judgement in the Finney Locke (the so-called "Cabbage Seed") case has raised questions about its relevance to your Association's own copyright Conditions of Sale for Seed of Potatoes. Your Council therefore instructed that enquiries be instituted to try to procure product liability Insurance Cover. These enquiries are continuing.

Your Council has also been required to give its attention to the vexed question of Members' responsibilities in respect of Income Tax (PAYE) and National Health Insurance Contribution deductions from wages of Casual/Harvest Workers. In respect that each individual case must be dealt with on its separate merits, your Secretariat will continue to provide assistance to Members as required.

While aware of the constraints and risks of mis-quotation inherent in any released announcements to the media, your Council has supported the issue of a Press Release following each of its meetings. Serving the dual purpose of re-inforcing the Association's public standing at the same time as it helps to keep Members informed on topical matters, your Council trusts this policy will continue to earn continuing Membership support. To this end, of course, Membership "feed-back" is a vital ingredient.

Your Council has long been alert to the trading dangers posed by the use of (and the risks of cross-contamination by) agricultural chemicals on the production and marketing of both seed and ware potatoes. While anxious to avoid any suggestion^{of} panic (scaremongering) situation, your Council has indentified the institution of an industry-wide, educative appraisal of the subject as a high priority objective. As part of its concerted initiative (which includes pressure on the Department of Agriculture and on other bodies within the Scottish potato industry) your Council has arranged an address/discussion meeting, to follow this year's Annual General Meeting of Members.

In conclusion of this Report, your Council draws your attention to what is probably the single, most important topical matter in the potato industry today - the future role and activities of the Potato Marketing Board. Your Association responded most vigorously to the Board in respect that your Association had been excluded from discussions which have already taken place. Your Association has also accepted an invitation from the National Farmers' Union of Scotland to take part in exploratory discussions with that Organisation.

In this matter in particular, your Council's opinion is that "feed-back" of the views of the whole Membership is vital. In the process of the formulation of your Association's policy and response, each and every Member of the Association is called upon to make his own views known (in due course) either by telephone or in writing, either to a Member of Council or direct to the Secretariat.

Remember - the strength of any organisation rests entirely upon the degree of ALL its Members' active participation in the decision-making process.